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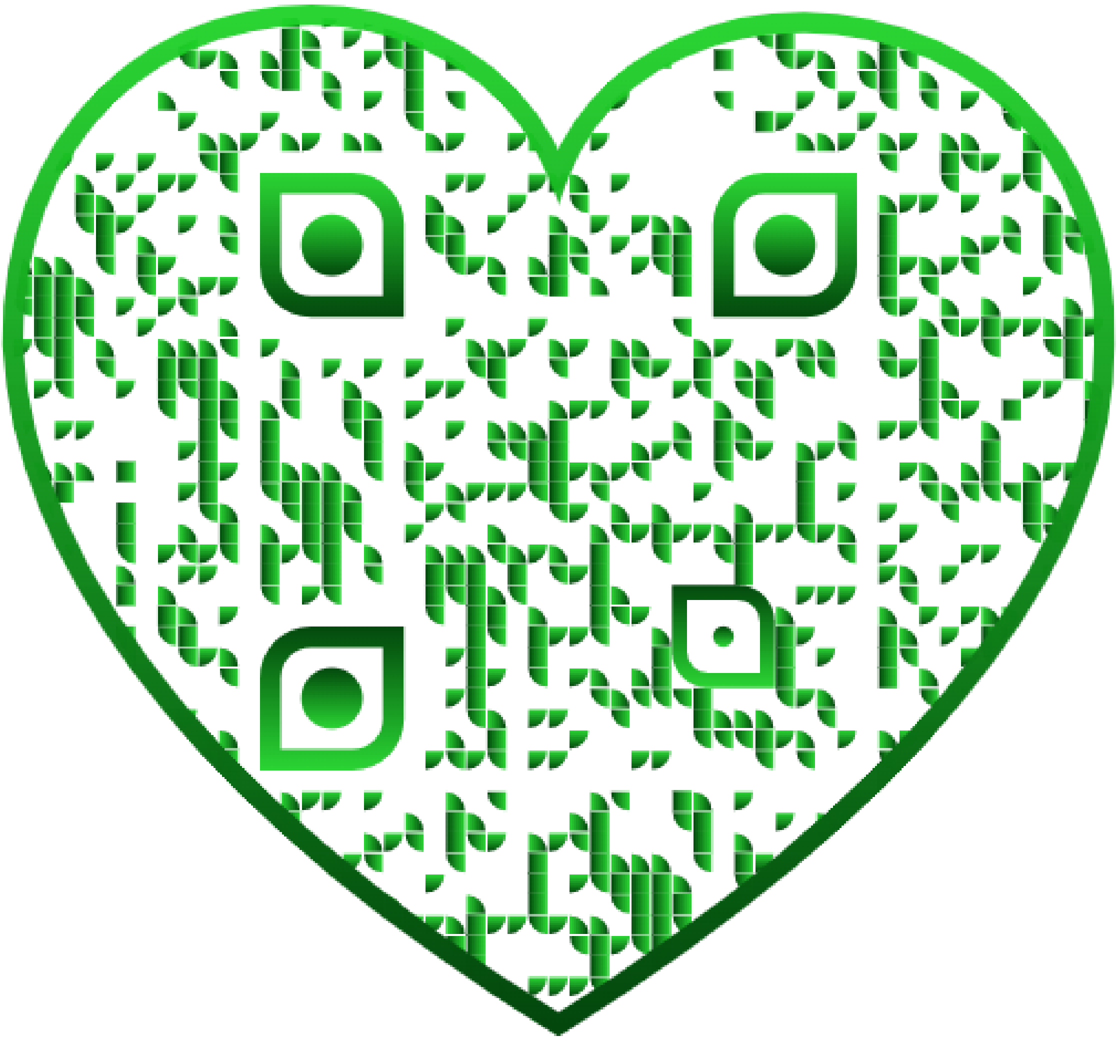

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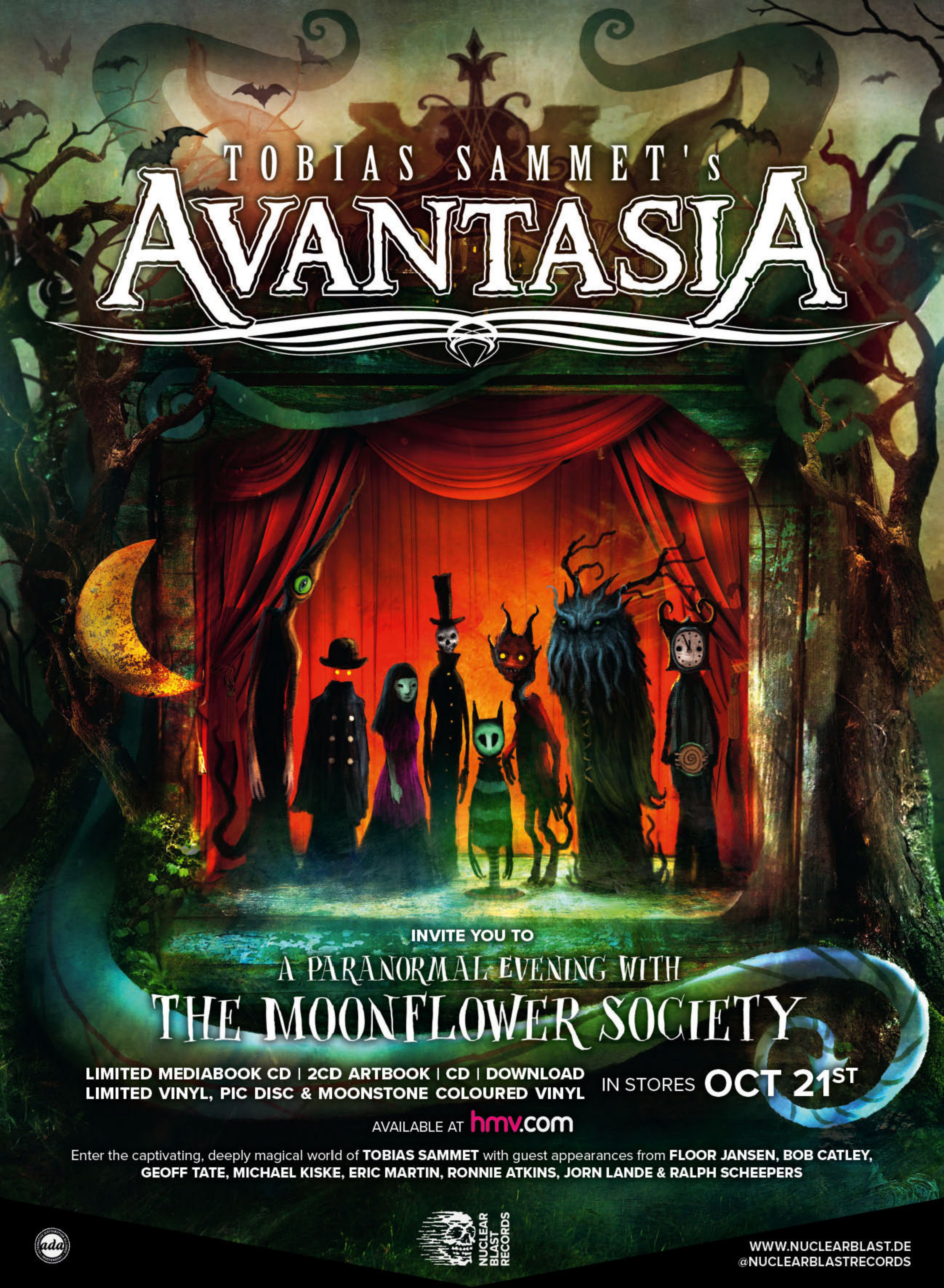
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Many musicians who have been in massively successful bands don't get a second shot at the limelight, always living in the shadow of their former glories. Guitarist Mark Tremonti could easily have been one such man. Having been one of the linchpins of the mega-selling Creed from the mid-90s through to the early 00s, it was entirely plausible that that was his one moment in the sun. Thankfully, however, fate had other plans, and in 2004, Tremonti hooked up with singer Myles Kennedy and Alter Bridge was born.

"Both of us knew this was the right move," Tremonti told *Classic Rock* back then. "Not only is Myles a fantastic singer, he's also such a nice guy; so easy to get along with. We even have a laugh!" And in the intervening two decades, Mark, Myles – and cohorts Brian and Scott – have contined to have a laugh and go from strength to strength. Four Top 10 albums on the bounce (so far!), sold-out O2 Arenas and Royal Albert Halls... What's next?!

We collared them to find out...

Siân Llewellyn, Editor

COVER PHOTO: ROB BLACKHAM

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This month's contributors

ROB BLACKHAM
Before he picked up the camera, Rob played guitar with UK rock band Redwood and worked in the studio with Massive Attack and Reuben, among others. "Failed rock stars make the best music photographers," he jokes. The list of musicians he's shot includes Slash, Billy Gibbons, Eric Clapton, Van Morrison, Clutch and this month's cover stars, Alter Bridge's Mark Tremonti and Myles Kennedy.

DAVE LING
A co-founder of *Classic Rock*, Dave was at the Reading Festival in 1980 when Slade came back from the dead (replacing Ozzy's new band Blizzard Of Ozz). His latest interview with Noddy Holder about the band's five-disc boxed live collection, *All The World Is A Stage*, which includes a recording of that fateful day, can be found on page 58.

HENRY YATES
Henry Yates has written for many titles including *The Guardian, Telegraph, NME, Guitarist, Total Guitar* and *Metal Hammer.* He's also the author of Walter Trout's official biography, *Rescued From Reality*, a talking head on Times Radio, and this month he spent some time with Massive Wagons for us (p64). See yatescreative copywriting.com and @henryyateswords for more.

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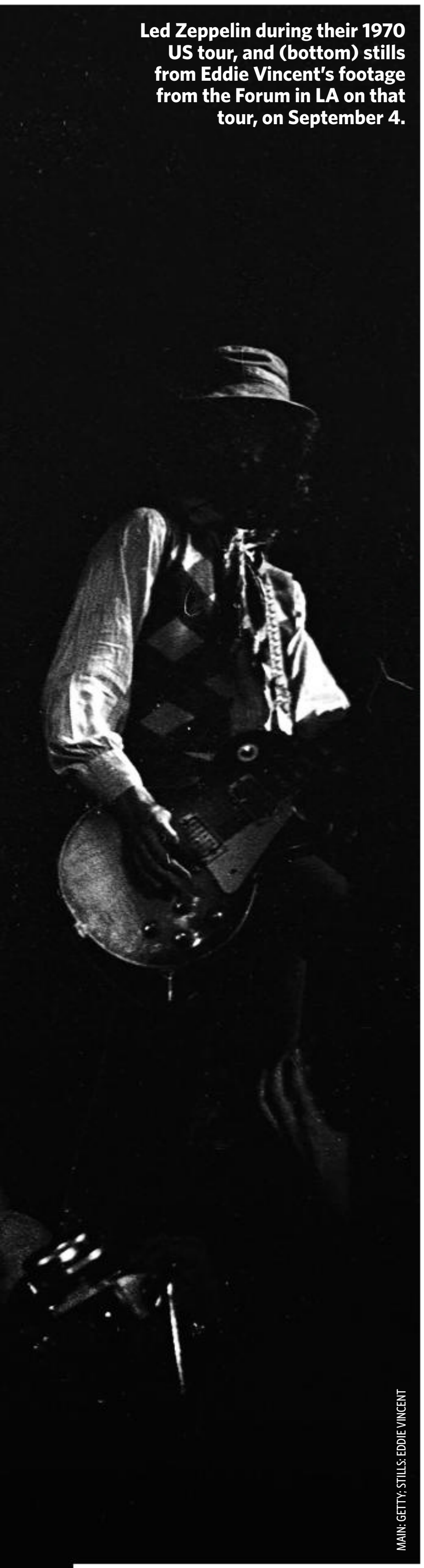

Led Zeppelin during their 1970 US tour, and (bottom) stills from Eddie Vincent's footage from the Forum in LA on that tour, on September 4.

MAIN: GETTY; STILLS: EDDIE VINCENT

Unseen Led Zep Footage Unearthed

Fan-shot film from a 1970 LA show discovered in a drawer.

Seven minutes of footage from Led Zeppelin's celebrated show at the Inglewood Forum in Los Angeles on September 4, 1970, during the band's sixth American tour, has been discovered after lying unattended in a drawer for 50 years. The footage has been matched to audio from the band's famous *On Blueberry Hill* audio bootleg, which was recorded the same night by the pirates also responsible for Bob Dylan's famous *Great White Wonder* and the Stones' *Live'r Than You'll Ever Be*.

The footage was shot by Led Zeppelin fan Eddie Vincent, who borrowed his parents' home movie camera – a wind-up 8mm Kodak Brownie capable of recording in 30-second bursts – and took it and two reels of film to the show, smuggling it all into the venue under the armpits of a baggy jacket.

"I had really great seats," Vincent tells *Classic Rock*. "They were right behind the band. I had seats in the front row, right behind John Bonham's kit. The only problem was that you couldn't really see John because the gong was there, but he came around and chatted to us while they were doing the acoustic set.

"He said hello and we told him how great he was, slavishly praising this icon. We were teenagers, and totally gobsmacked. I even got him to pose for a couple of pictures, but the flash didn't go off. He laughed, and my friends and I laughed, because I kept screwing up."

Vincent's film footage, however, came out fine. Over the years he had occasionally attempted to transfer it to more user-friendly formats, but for the most part the reels of film gathered dust for the best part of half a century. This changed when he came across some live footage on the internet of The Who shot at Anaheim Stadium in 1970, and noticed its similarity to some Who footage of his own.

He contacted video bootleg trader John Waters, who was helping fans transfer their old film to digital, and asked if he could help. Waters was blown away by the quality of Vincent's film and asked if he had any more, which is when he revealed he had the Zeppelin film.

"My collector's heart was racing," says Waters. "A few days later, the reels arrive and the magic unfolds."

Vincent's footage was sent to another collector, Etienne Marchand, a French Led Zep expert and audio synchroniser, who was able to identify the exact moments in the 106-minute set that Vincent had filmed, and match them to the relevant parts of the *On Blueberry Hill* audio. The previously unseen footage is of the band performing parts of *Since I've Been Loving You*, *Thank You*, *What Is And What Should Never Be*, *Whole Lotta Love*, *Some Other Guy* and *The Lemon Song*, as well as organ and theremin solos.

The footage was then uploaded to YouTube on the 50th anniversary of the original show. Suffice to say it was greeted with open-mouthed enthusiasm by the Zeppelin fan community.

Waters also heard back from the Zeppelin camp. "I'd already sourced a live film from San Francisco in 1973, and they were like: 'Yeah, put it in the bin with the rest of them,'" he tells *Classic Rock*, "but with the *Blueberry Hill* video their response was amazing.

"To write ourselves into a little bit of Led Zeppelin history is an honour," he continues. "The music needs to be out there. I know a lot of collectors and traders that don't give their stuff away, and that's a shame to me. Music's to be shared, and today you need it to get away from the crazy world. And if this film brings a lot of people happiness, hey, we did a good job."

There's more to come from Waters and Vincent. Vincent's Anaheim Stadium footage of The Who is on the way, and Waters is working on footage of Fleetwood Mac shot at Madison Square Garden on the *Rumours* tour in 1977. "It's great," Waters says. "Head-to-toe footage of Lindsey Buckingham standing right in front of you."

There's also a postscript of sorts: the year after the Forum show, when Led Zeppelin came back to Los Angeles on yet another North American tour, Vincent returned with a camera and a microphone, and was happily recording the show until a familiar, looming figure approached.

"I had a little mic I put on a floor stand under my seat," says Vincent. "I guess at some point the light shined off this mic, and all of a sudden [Led Zeppelin manager] Peter Grant was by the side of the stage looking at me, and then he started walking over. I was thinking 'Oh no!', and he walked right up to me and started pulling at my microphone. You can hear it all on the tape. Finally you hear him go, 'You're not allowed to tape the concert', and it goes dead."

After the show, contrary to reputation, Grant returned all of the equipment he'd confiscated, including the audio recording. But for Vincent the scare was enough, and his bootlegging career was over. **FL**

This month The Dirt was compiled by Lee Dorrian, Dave Everley, Jo Kendall, Fraser Lewry, Dave Ling, Chris Lord, Henry Yates

RIP

Thank you
and good night.

John Till

December 24, 1945 – September 4, 2022

John Till was a guitarist with American singer Janis Joplin's last backing group the Full Tilt Boogie Band, who toured with Joplin and played on her posthumously released 1970 album *Pearl*. Till died at home following a long illness.

Stuart Anstis

May 2, 1974 – August 21, 2022

Stuart Anstis was UK black-metal band Cradle Of Filth's guitarist from 1995 to '99. Although he and band leader Dani Filth fell out during their working relationship, Filth was quick to pay tribute to Anstis, who played on several of the band's best-known albums after he passed away unexpectedly at the age of 48. "[They] would have been completely different creatures [without] the depth of his astute and deliciously dark musicianship," acknowledged the singer.

'Clutch' Carruthers

April 20, 1962 – September 9, 2022

The lead singer with New Wave Of Heavy Metal band Tysondog has died of unannounced cause. John Paul 'Clutch' Carruthers fronted the North-East band from 1983 to '87, then returned in 2010 for a further seven years, and appears on their current album *Midnight*. He had just turned 60. "See you on the other side, kid," said a band statement.

Kimmo Blom

January 31, 1970 – August 2022

Kimmo Blom, the singer with several Finnish rock bands has died from cancer. Blom was best known for fronting Urban Tale and Leverage, and was also a member of Heartplay and Boys Of The Band, the latter of whom competed in the Eurovision Song Contest in 2010. He was 52.

David Andersson

February 25,1975 – September 14, 2022

Guitarist David Andersson, a member of the Swedish bands Night Flight Orchestra and Soilwork, has died due to "alcohol and mental illness". He joined Soilwork in 1995, and played on four of the band's albums, and co-founded NFO in 2007. He was 47. Both groups plan to continue, with the latter undertaking a short club tour in Andersson's memory, which includes a London date on November 10.

Dave Sherman

Died September 6, 2022

Doom-metal veteran Dave Sherman was a member of Spirit Caravan, The Obsessed, Earthride, Wretched and several other bands. No cause of death of the 55-year-old has been announced.

Mike Pela

January 13, 1950 – July 23, 2022

London-born record producer and mixer Mike Pela started out as backroom staff before working with ELO, Alice Cooper, Hawkwind and Stephen Stills, among others. He was 72 at the time of his passing.

Ramsey Lewis

May 27, 1935 – September 12, 2022

A triple-Grammy winner, jazz pianist Ramsey Lewis had a 60-year career that included hit versions of *Hang On Sloopy* and *The In Crowd*. The 87-year-old died in his sleep at his home in Chicago, according to his son.

Drummie Zeb

September 24, 1959 – September 2, 2022

Born Angus Gaye in London, Drummie Zeb (pictured) was a drummer and lead singer for the reggae band Aswad, and a producer for other acts. He died shortly before his 63rd birthday of as-yet unreported cause.

Sandy Roberton

July 7, 1942 – July 25, 2022

Sandy Roberton began his career in the London-based duo Tom & Dusty. As a producer he worked on albums for Steeleye Span and John Martyn, before moving to America and taking up management for other producers. Roberton was 80 years old.

WELCOME BACK

Queensrÿche

They're back with a new album, and still with the signature sound they say "will always be in our DNA".

As the prog-metal band release *Digital Noise Alliance*, their fourth album since the very ugly break-up with original lead singer Geoff Tate, guitarist Michael Wilton, a fellow co-founder of the Seattle-based group, insists that getting back together with Tate is the last thing on Queensrÿche's mind.

***Digital Noise Alliance* is Queensrÿche's fourth album with singer Todd La Torre. A decade after the exit of Geoff Tate, how well do you think the slump of those last few Tate-fronted records has been reversed?**

The whole rebuilding process is progressing well. For the most part it's about giving the fans what they want: the [signature] Queensrÿche sound. That's something we've done over countless tours and several albums. It's a work in progress, but right now everything feels very strong.

> "We're on a roll with this version of Queensrÿche."

The album treads a fine line between the familiar-sounding *In Extremis* and *Behind The Walls* and some more melodic and even proggier moments. It's a broad-based record.

That's true. Because it was written during the pandemic we took an improvised approach to the writing. That made it more organic. In the past, everybody emailed the songs back and forth. Of course, keeping the reference points familiar is there in the back of your mind, but at the end of the day opinions are subjective, you can't lose too much sleep over what people will think. A couple of original guys are here, and that sound will always be in our DNA.

Casey Grillo has been the band's touring drummer for five years. Now he's a full band member, what does he bring to Queensrÿche?

Besides being a great drummer with his own personality and style, Casey became a part of the writing and arrangement. He's a real team player.

What's the latest in the legal dispute with co-founding drummer Scott Rockenfeld, who sued Queensrÿche and was counter-sued over a number of allegations?

It's ongoing and the lawyers are dealing with it. It'll work itself out. Queensrÿche are always being sued about something, that's part of the business. But life goes on.

How much do you tire of the soap-opera-like headlines that seem to cloud the band's career?

It's just the way of the world, stirred up by yellow journalism. That's prevalent in all types of media – politics, sport, everything. It's always: "Let's see how we can cut this guy down." You have to keep a good sense of humour and move past the bumps in the road.

Would you be surprised to hear that in an interview for his most recent European tour Geoff Tate told *Classic Rock*: "I've been open to talking about a reunion with the guys for a couple of years, but honestly, it doesn't seem likely. I do wish them luck because they're going through a tumultuous time, as probably all of us are, getting things started again. I wish them well in that."

That's respectable and the feeling is mutual, but we're on a roll with this version of Queensrÿche. It would be silly to stop our momentum. I wish the best for him, and that's all I can really say. **DL**

Digital Noise Alliance is out now via Century Media.

DRUMMIE ZEB: KEVIN NIXON; QUEENSRŸCHE: SILLY ROBOT STUDIOS/PRESS

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The Rock World Pays Tribute

Queen Elizabeth II

April 21, 1926 – September 8, 2022

Stars from the world of rock music paid tribute to Queen Elizabeth II, Britain's longest-serving monarch, after she died at the age of 96.

"For my whole life Her Majesty, Queen Elizabeth II has always been there," said Mick Jagger. "I can recall watching her wedding highlights on TV. I remember her as a beautiful young lady, to the much beloved grandmother of the nation. My deepest sympathies are with the Royal family."

Paul McCartney commented: "God bless Queen Elizabeth II, may she rest in peace. Long live the King." Ozzy Osbourne said: "With a heavy heart I say that it is devastating [to think] of England without Queen Elizabeth II." Judas Priest frontman Rob Halford added: "My second mom has gone. Her Majesty felt like that to so many of us." A statement from Iron Maiden said the band were "saddened" by the loss of "a British institution".

"We will never see the likes of [Elizabeth] again," said Def Leppard's Joe Elliott. "She transcended eras with good grace and service to her country that is unparalleled anywhere or by anyone."

More tributes came from artists including Sir Elton John, Stevie Nicks, Brian May, Rick Wakeman, Saxon and Billy Idol. **DL**

Jimmy Page and Brian May meet the Queen in 2005.

Hendrix At 80

New live album in November.

The 80th birthday of Jimi Hendrix is to be celebrated with a new live album from the guitar great, who passed away in 1970. *The Jimi Hendrix Experience Los Angeles Forum: April 26, 1969* is released on November 18, ahead of what would have been Jimi's birthday on November 27, via Experience Hendrix LLC and Legacy Recordings.

Never before released in its entirety, the full track-listing is: *Intro, Tax Free, Foxey Lady, Red House, Spanish Castle Magic, Star Spangled Banner, Purple Haze, I Don't Live Today, Voodoo Child (Slight Return), Sunshine Of Your Love* and a reprise of *Voodoo Child (Slight Return)*.

The music from the show by the Jimi Hendrix Experience – Hendrix, bassist Noel Redding and drummer Mitch Mitchell – was remixed by the long-time Hendrix producer/engineer Eddie Kramer.

The package will be available on two-LP vinyl, CD and all digital platforms. **DL**

NEWS

Todd Rundgren releases a new studio album, *Space Force*, on October 14. It includes guest appearances from Steve Vai, Rick Nielsen, Sparks, Neil Finn, Rivers Cuomo of Weezer, The Lemon Twigs, Thomas Dolby and hip-hop artists The Roots and Narcy.

Joe Lynn Turner has accused Ritchie Blackmore of damaging the legacy of **Rainbow** with a "trainwreck" reunion. Turner, who fronted the band during the 1980s, had tried unsuccessfully to involve himself and many other past members. Ronnie Romero, the singer chosen by Blackmore, responded: "I won't tolerate somebody calling my work 'cheap'… No sir."

Mötley Crüe and **Def Leppard**'s Stadium Tour generated $173 million (£153 million) from ticket sales over the summer, with an average 37,520 fans attending each of its 36 shows.

James and Tom Martin, the co-founding keyboard player and bassist with **Vega**, have left the group. Their entirely amicable exit leaves frontman Nick Workman and guitarist Marcus Thurston as the last remaining originals.

Get well soon to Thunder frontman **Danny Bowes** (pictured), who was hospitalised after a head injury that caused the band to cancel their charity show at The Garage on November 3. Now out of intensive care, Bowes is said to be responding well to further treatment.

WELCOME BACK

Archers Of Loaf

Eric Bachmann on burnout, returning, and rediscovering his anger – poured into the band's new album – at 52.

For Eric Bachmann, anger has always made the best fuel. The frontman's righteous fury made Archers Of Loaf one of the spikiest – albeit most unsung – prospects of early-90s American indie-rock, Bachmann howling over a dissonant jangle. And although 1998's split seemed permanent, Bachmann tells us the Trump era topped up his bile tanks, paving the way to the jagged anthemics of *Reason In Decline*, the band's fifth album.

How would you describe the vibe of *Reason In Decline*?

Well, I'll leave that to the journalists. I think it's angry rock music.

The band seemed utterly fed up after the split. Twenty-four years later, are you surprised there's another Archers album?

Yeah, no doubt. As a working band we were so done. We were so burnt out, starting to disagree more about what the band should sound like. So before it got into too much conflict we said let's just stop. The idea of making another record was absurd.

What changed?

I don't want to be political. I want to write about the human heart. But when you live in the US and you're moderately sensitive, and you have a president like we had, you have to react. I thought, well, if I'm going to make a rock record, let's do an Archers record. Because you're not going to find a better group of guys, with the chemistry that we had.

So the political environment lit your fire again?

Yeah. I understand that anger makes good rock'n'roll, and I had a lot of it [at the start of the band]. But when I tried to write a new Archers record in 2015 – because I'd got sick of people asking me – I couldn't do it. It wasn't authentic, because I wasn't feeling those things that had made me angry in the past. But then this situation happened and I found I could do it in a way where, as a fifty-two-year-old man, I wasn't being a jackass.

Is there still that negativity in the air, despite Trump's exit?

Unfortunately, Trump is a symptom of a much greater problem. I think the biggest culprit is that media is irresponsible. There's no accountability, and there's this idea that if we can keep everybody angry at each other and arguing… Conflict is the main ingredient of good drama. And good drama sells a lot of tickets.

> **"I understand that anger makes good rock'n'roll, and I had a lot of it."**

You've said the pandemic hit you particularly hard.

I've been playing in bands since I was fourteen. I couldn't work at all, and in terms of my mental health it just collapsed. Suicide ideation and all this stuff, it overwhelmed my brain. And when I got help – not by my choice, but my spouse's – it became very clear that music had always been a health thing for me. It was the way that I coped with the world.

You must be looking forward to going on the road again?

Every two or three years we'll play a show, because we all get along. The thing that scares me is that now we're doing weeks in a row, and that's when you get in trouble. I've had work on my throat, so I'm okay now, but it's very physical. I'll be candid, I couldn't sing these songs without being in a room full of fans screaming back at me. That's the joy of this. **HY**

Reason In Decline is released on October 21 via Merge Records.

HM THE QUEEN ELIZABETH II: GETTY; ARCHERS OF LOAF: KATE FIX/PRESS

the DiRT

HIGH HOPES

Birth

> "I struggle with band names *a lot.* Then I had a dream and 'Birth' popped out of my head."

Meet the San Diego quartet delivering premium 70s prog elements for modern ears.

Sometimes we need a little escapism. So how about escaping 2022 and going back in time, musically, to around 1970 to indulge in some premium progressive sounds inspired by King Crimson, PFM, Aphrodite's Child and Area? Enter San Diego foursome Birth. You might have encountered them before, around a decade ago when Conor Riley (vocals, synths, electric piano, organ, acoustic guitar) and Brian Ellis (guitar, electric piano, percussion) were part of the prog-psych masters Astra. After two very good albums – *The Weirding* and *The Black Chord*, brought out on our own *Buried Treasure* writer Lee Dorrian's Rise Above label – Astra downed tools. Then in 2017, Riley and Ellis's new venture started to, er, gestate.

"Brian and I were the youngest in the group," Riley says. "We were the ones going out and partying every night after the shows. We sorta stuck together."

Today Riley is enthusing to *CR* about a recent date played at the Psycho Las Vegas festival ("We saw Mercyful Fate!") as well as chatting about Birth's recent debut album, *Born*. Astra's work came from doom and psychedelia, as well as the prog world. *Born* reveals a band – completed by Trevor Mast on bass and Paul Marrone – more musically evolved. At the start of the century, Riley was in a psychedelic group called Silver Sunshine, described by the local paper as sounding like "mildly crazed pagan folk music". Now the multi-instrumentalist can move from soulful, resonant Greg Lake-like vocals – with lyrics on allegorical, dystopian themes – to unsettling keyboard sections that blend smoothly with his bandmates' talents.

"The reason I play music is to collaborate with people," he says. "The music ends up sounding better. Birth is a collaborative thing; I write a lot, but everyone's added so much of their own style that there are joint credits."

Birth's band name is also very much of another era. "I struggle with band names *a lot*," Riley laughs. "This issue was on my mind for weeks. Then I had a dream and 'Birth' popped out of my head when I woke up. It fits what we're doing; a call back to the 70s prog bands that had one epic, memorable or impactful word as a name."

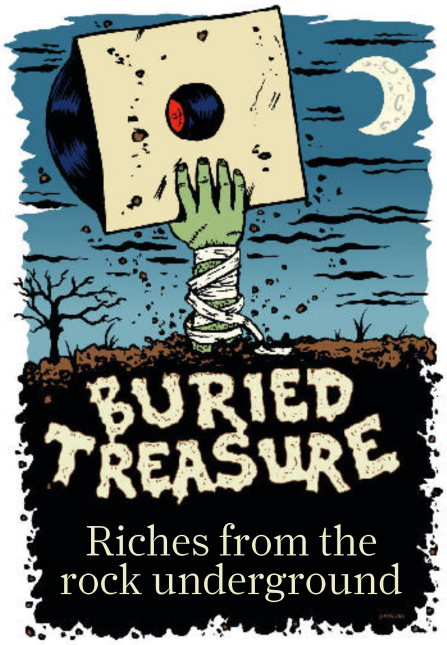
It particularly works in some early artwork, with the logo beneath a longhaired dude emerging from an egg. "That was by [psychedelic artist] Arik Roper. It was supposed to be Jesus coming out of an egg… but I knew we'd get complaints!"

Riley might have started as a metalhead, but prog is now his favourite musical flavour. "What I like about prog is you can do whatever you want: you could do a singer-songwriter thing, then have a classical or a jazz part," Riley smiles. "I like to have a song structure to base it around, but then I'll dig back into archives of other little parts that I have, put all sorts of stuff together… prog means you never have to throw anything away!" **JK**

Born is out now via Bad Omen Records.

FOR FANS OF...

"It was the first prog album I heard that checked all the boxes," Conor Riley says of King Crimson's game-changing debut studio album *In The Court Of The Crimson King*. "It had singer-songwriter stuff, it was influenced by R&B and folk, then went heavier. It is central to what inspired me, put together in a beautiful way."



MIRKWOOD

Mirkwood, Flams Ltd, UK, 1973. £3,500

Dover-based Mirkwood was formed in 1971 by schoolfriends Mick Morris and Jack Castle. Morris was once part of the Rolling Stones, a popular local act who were forced to change their name to The Playboys when the name was also adopted by an up-and-coming London band. The Playboys continued throughout the 60s, supporting acts such as Cream, the Jimi Hendrix Experience and John Mayall's Bluesbreakers.

After seeing a performance of *Yours Is No Disgrace* by Yes on TV, the direction of Mirkwood was realised. Released locally in a micro amount of 99 copies, *Mirkwood* is one of the most coveted privately pressed UK underground albums out there. The home recording aesthetic may be off-putting for some, but repeated listens unveil unique, subtle intricacies.

Opener *Take My Love* is a satisfying upbeat blues-rocker with fuzzed-out guitars and heavy vibes. It's followed by

'*Mirkwood* is one of the most coveted UK underground albums.'

Love's Glass Of Sunshine, an 11-minute dreamy folk-rock epic which picks up pace during the mid-section.

The Leech starts out as a heavy proto metal riffer, with the twin guitar work of Morris and Castle giving a touch of class. *Just Because* is well-constructed number which works itself around a memorable vocal line. *Clockwise* conjures up psychedelic imagery relating to the pressures of intense city life in London. Album closer *Lavendula* is a mini-epic with inventive drum patterns, tasteful guitar duelling, vocal harmonies and heavy riffing.

Following the album's release Mirkwood were joined by Topper Headon on drums, prior to him joining The Clash. **LD**

NEWS

UFO had to cancel the final leg of their Last Orders European tour after singer Phil Mogg suffered a heart attack. The band hope to reschedule the gigs if his health allows. "I must go on a rehabilitation program which lasts around three months," Mogg explains. "I didn't want to bow out in this fashion."

Rob Halford's second book, *Biblical: Heavy Metal Scriptures*, is published in hardback on November 1. In it the Judas Priest singer runs his "expert eye over all facets of hard rock history and the heavy metal world".

Roger Waters has announced a string of European dates in March, April and May. At press time there were no British or Irish dates included. In cheekily referring to his current trek This Is Not A Drill as "my first farewell tour", the 79-year-old has implied that he may not be touring for too much longer.

Californian spoof-metallers **Steel Panther** have confirmed Spyder – real name Joe Lester – as replacement for departed bassist Lexxi Foxx. "Spyder is the chocolate to Steel Panther's peanut butter," the band say.

The Lives Of Brian, the delayed memoir from AC/DC frontman **Brian Johnson** (pictured) is available now published by Michael Joseph.

John Lennon's killer has been denied parole for the 12th time. Mark David Chapman, who shot the former Beatle in 1980, is now 76

WELCOME BACK

Gun

With an unplugged album and a new single filled with nostalgia, the Glaswegian band are thrilled to be back.

Gun's co-founding siblings, guitarist Jools and frontman Dante Gizzi, conceived the idea of an unplugged album, *The Carlton Songs*, while the nation was in lockdown. Released as a single, an electric track called *Backstreet Brothers* is an ode to their childhood neighbourhood, the titular Carlton, in the suburbs of Glasgow.

Presumably, being stuck indoors provided a lightbulb moment for *The Carlton Songs*?
Jools: Aye, we were ready to go into the studio for a new album when everything changed. But we still felt creative, despite the havoc that was being caused to the industry and the effect on venues.

Most unplugged albums are an easy option; this one is really good.
Dante: Thanks, that's great to hear. Not being the original singer, it was quite a challenge, and we didn't want to do them just the same as they were before. What would be the point?

Dante, it really shows your growth as a lead singer.
Dante: I appreciate that.
Jools: After Toby [Jepson] had left [in 2010] we had to decide whether or not Gun could continue. Dante was the natural choice, and he's doing a great job.

Glasgow often gets bad press. Was it a good place to grow up?
Jools: [laughing] We're in Carlton right now, at our mum's place. Above us is the bedroom where me, Dante and Mark [Rankin, original singer] would get out the guitars and jam. All of the songs – *Better Days, Steel Your Fire* – were written there.

Basically, Carlton is a part of you?
Jools: In the seventies it got a reputation for being a tough area. Music played a big part in taking us away from that.

***Backstreet Brothers* is a nostalgic nod to your shared youth. And it includes an obligatory mention of Buckfast wine, the breakfast of champions.**
Dante: A lot of that was drunk. We've a lot of fond memories from those times.

What does the album tell us about Gun and their songs?
Jools: That they stand the test of time. A lot of fans have told us that our songs helped to get them through difficult times, and hearing that is a real honour. If your songs are honest, hopefully they'll stick.

"It's hard to describe the buzz of relief and ecstasy."

Presumably the acoustic album also lit a fire to plug back in again?
Dante: Aye, the electric album comes next. We hope to get that out by March or April next year.

Tell us about Gun's first post-covid gig. How did it feel?
Jools: It was last summer at the Stonedead Festival [in Newark]. Man, there was a point where I was close to tears. It's hard to describe the buzz of relief and ecstasy. Every minute of it was mind-blowing.

In December 2019 Gun celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of their debut album *Taking On The World* with a tour with FM and the Dan Reed Network. Was it as much fun as it looked?
Jools: It was. The three bands backstage, the gigs and the laughs. No clashes of ego, and so much camaraderie. I'd love to do another package like that. **DL**

The Carlton Songs is available now via Cherry Red.

BRIAN JOHNSON: WILL IRELAND

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05: Nightrain, Bradford
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ROB BLACKHAM/PRESS

"We do get quite intense. Maybe it comes from growing up on Queen and David Bowie."

★ HIGH HOPES

October Drift

Autumnal alt.rockers prove they belong somewhere with their latest album.

Band names are often arbitrary: inconsequential words sandwiched together to form a semantic flagpole that in time will encompass everything we hold dear about our most treasured collectives. Simultaneously, they can mean nothing and everything. That said, other months are available, we tell October Drift frontman Kiran Roy. "We did try a few other ones, but there's something about our vibe," he says. "A sombre feel, like a changing of the seasons. Drifting into winter…"

Based in Somerset, October Drift have been refining their high-energy, alt.rock sound since the mid-2010s. Lock Joy Division and Nirvana in a room and the result wouldn't sound too dissimilar – granted, it would lack October Drift's modern sheen. "Bands like The Smashing Pumpkins and My Bloody Valentine are massive influences, so there's definitely 90s grunge and some shoegaze," Roy says.

Completed by guitarist Dan Young, drummer Chris Holmes and bassist Alex Bispham, the band's second album, *I Don't Belong Anywhere*, is out now. Lead single *Airborne Panic Attack* is no less thrilling than its title. Stinging guitar riffs lash around surging rhythms and Roy's anthemic vocals. The frontman reckons this follow-up to 2020 debut *Forever Whatever* is more direct, polished and gloomier. "It isn't completely devoid of hope, but it's darker," he says.

With a reputation for being a phenomenally energetic live act, October Drift made an appearance at this summer's BST Hyde Park festival – slotted between Pixies and Pearl Jam (albeit on the smaller Birdcage stage). Considered and unassuming with his answers, it's hard to imagine the werewolf-like transformation that occurs once you hand Roy a microphone and a stage. At BST he decided to scale a tree mid-song. "I did that on the fly," the singer laughs. "I stuffed my microphone in my pocket and started climbing, but then I was like, 'Shit, I'm not gonna make it!' So I was just hanging off! We do get quite intense and we've always tried to outdo each other. Maybe it comes from growing up on Queen and David Bowie."

Having toured voraciously for years, they've encountered some odd audiences. "We've played hundreds of gigs in empty rooms," Roy says. "I remember one at a youth club and the audience was just two teenagers getting off with each other in a corner and then a mother and baby with a pram. It was a real Anvil moment."

But whether it's warming up for Eddie Vedder or rocking out for a few punters at the Dog & Bollock, October Drift are the kind of band that live and die by their gigs. "Even if it's for 10 people, the idea is that we give everything we've got and make sure it's memorable," Roy states. "We want to do this forever if we can. But I think we would even if we were the last people on Earth." **CL**

I Don't Belong Anywhere is out now via Physical Education Recordings.

FOR FANS OF…

"Loads of bands have bled into our sound, but for our first album we used *In Utero* as a reference point," Kiran Roy tells us. "We just wanted to capture the band in a room. Kurt Cobain wanted Nirvana to be the biggest band in the world, but then maybe realised that he didn't [after *Nevermind*]."

THE STORIES BEHIND THE SONGS

Bonnie Tyler

Total Eclipse Of The Heart

With more than a billion streams across YouTube and Spotify, singer Bonnie Tyler's collaboration with writer/producer Jim Steinman might just be the biggest power ballad of them all.

Words: **Jo Kendall**

On paper, the partnership looks weird. On the one hand there's pop and country singer Bonnie Tyler, a coal miner's daughter from a Welsh village who'd in 1977 struck global-chart gold with the MOR-tinged singalong *It's A Heartache*. On the other is Jim Steinman, a composer and record producer from New York who's renowned for bringing Meat Loaf's bombastic, sweat-soaked rock theatre to the masses with the mega-selling *Bat Out Of Hell* the same year.

However, after her fourth studio album *Goodbye To The Island* in 1981, Tyler was distancing herself from her manager-songwriter-producers Steve Wolfe and Ronnie Scott (the pop writer, not the jazz club owner), who kept pursuing a soft country rock route.

Tyler had a naturally bluesy, raspy voice – made even more so by a throat operation to remove nodules – and at this point in her career she wanted a change, to "sing more raunchy songs, songs with a bit of energy". She was impressed with *Bat Out Of Hell*, and asked her record company, CBS, to contact Jim Steinman, with a view to production and songwriting.

"They said: 'He's never going to do it, Bonnie, it's a long shot,'" Tyler told *BBC Breakfast* in 2021. "And I said: 'Please try.'"

Steinman initially turned down the offer – he'd been knocked back by a fall-out and litigation with Meat Loaf – but after hearing demos from Tyler he said yes. He'd grown up on classical music and opera, and felt Tyler had that in her vocal skill set.

"I was a little bit surprised they would ask me, but my second thought it was a real challenge because of that," Steinman told *Rolling Stone*. "And I thought she [had] one of the most passionate voices I'd heard in rock'n'roll since Janis Joplin."

The two met at Steinman's penthouse pad in Central Park. "[My manager and I] stepped out of the lift and we were met with a trail of M&Ms leading up to his front door… I knew we were in for a surreal experience," Tyler recalled in 2020.

Steinman tested Tyler's music taste by playing her Creedence Clearwater Revival's *Have You Ever Seen The Rain* and Ian Hunter's *Goin' Through The Motions*. She loved them both, and they made it on to Tyler and Steinman's first album together, 1983's *Faster Than The Speed Of Night*.

Steinman's background in musical theatre, love of classical music and Phil Spector Wall Of Sound style came through on one track in particular that he'd been refining for a long time, *Total Eclipse Of The Heart*. It was originally a song titled *Come In The Night*, from a high-school musical he had written and starred in 1969, *The Dream Engine*, and he revisited it for a concept based on FW Murnau's 1922 vampire film *Nosferatu*.

It was composed during a lunar eclipse by the nocturnally industrious writer, and now titled *Vampires In Love*, and Steinman needed someone to do it justice. He later stated: "[Bonnie's] was the perfect voice for what I was trying to get across… her performance was like an exorcism."

"Jim never did any demos – I learned all the songs beside him at the piano," Tyler told *Tim's Twitter Listening Party* in 2020. "I'll never forget the feeling when he played me *Total Eclipse* for the first time. [Regular collaborator] Rory Dodd sang the vocals. I couldn't believe he was offering it to me."

Like all the tracks on the upcoming album, takes were recorded live at The Power Station studio in New York. An all-star line-up surrounded Tyler – The E Street band's keyboard player Roy Bittan and drummer Max Weinberg reprised their roles from *Bat Out Of Hell*, joined on guitar by Rick Derringer, while Steve Buslowe – who played on *Dead Ringer For Love* and on Steinman's own *Bad For Good* – played bass.

They'd do nine takes of each track, listen to them at home, then come back the next day and discuss them. *Total Eclipse* was take two of the session, with overdubbing done on a more-is-more 64-track desk. Later, it was mixed over more than 12 hours by engineer Neil Dorfsman, who recalled to the *FT* that "Jim wanted the biggest drum sound ever recorded" but faders were at capacity and they "ran out of reverb".

The near-seven-minute album track had everything – *Phantom Of The Opera* organ, synth cannon sounds, a choir, even sleigh bells. And the legendary supernatural video for *Total Eclipse* – directed by seasoned pop-clip director Russell Mulcahy, who would go on to direct the film *Highlander* – was even more over-the-top than the track. There were wind machines, billowing drapes and blown-open doors, while ninjas, rockers, sports swimmers and laser-gazed choir boys all framed Tyler's bouffant hairdo and intense, operatic gesturing.

At the end of recording, Steinman told Dorfsman: "This is going to be the biggest song you've ever recorded." He was right; and not just in audio terms. At its peak *Total Eclipse Of The Heart* sold 60,000 copies a day and shot to No.1 on both sides of the Atlantic, and many other countries across the world.

'The near-seven-minute album track had everything – *Phantom Of The Opera* organ, synth cannon sounds, a choir, even sleigh bells.'

Tyler's passionate, powerhouse vocal performance was a triumph, and she still performs her biggest hit live today. It's Steinman's most-streamed composition on Spotify with nearly 508 million plays, trumped only by the video's 890 million views on YouTube.

Total Eclipse made Bonnie Tyler the ultimate power ballad diva, something she couldn't be more proud of – she's currently on TikTok inviting users to duet with her on the track.

"It is an incredible song. I never get tired of singing it," Tyler told *Rock Cellar* in 2021. "Every time I sing it is like the first time. I never would've dreamed when it was released that it would sell six million copies worldwide."

HEROIC VISION

Total Eclipse was a worldwide hit in 1983, but Tyler and Steinman's follow-ups didn't quite hit the same sweet spot with the public - until a film called *Footloose* came along the following year.

The film's score and screenplay were written by Dean Pitchford, a songwriter and screenwriter who'd contributed to *Fame*. Pitchford looked to snare Steinman to co-write the musical accompaniment to the film's dramatic tractor-race scene, so he pitched him part of the the lyric.' Steinman couldn't resist, and the pair brought Tyler back on board for another barnstorming performance with the song *Holding Out For A Hero*, which hit No.2 in the UK.

If you thought *Total Eclipse* had an OTT video, *Hero* ramped things up by 1,000 per cent, with bigger hair, a bigger dress, villainous cowboys on the rampage, a celestial choir and a burning ranch.

ALAMY

Total Eclipse **was Bonnie Tyler's biggest hit, selling more than six million copies.**

THE FACTS

RELEASE DATE
February 11, 1983

HIGHEST CHART POSITION
UK No.1
US No.1

PERSONNEL
Bonnie Tyler *Lead vocals*
Rick Derringer *Guitar*
Steve Buslowe *Bass*
Roy Bittan *Piano*
Larry Fast *Synthesisers*
Steve Margoshes *Additional synthesisers*
Max Weinberg *Drums*
Jimmy Maelen *Percussion*
Rory Dodd *Featured and backing vocals*
Eric Troyer *Backing vocals*

WRITTEN BY
Jim Steinman

PRODUCED BY
Jim Steinman

LABEL
Columbia

Q&A

Francis Rossi

Status Quo's grand statesman on un-Royal behaviour, his pal 'Reg' (aka Elton John) and the fear of slowing down.

Words: **Dave Everley** Portrait: **Tina Korhonen**

Francis Rossi is struggling with Zoom. On screen, the Status Quo frontman's mouth is moving but no sound is coming out. Attempts to fix the problem are waved off. It goes on like this for 30 seconds. Then it dawns: he's doing his Marcel Marceau impression.

"I like to mess with people," he says with a grin, dropping the comedy mime act. "I've got to keep myself entertained."

That's fair enough – he's been entertaining Quo fans for 55 years now, even if he's the last original member left standing.

Early 2000s Quo albums *Heavy Traffic* and *Riffs* have just been reissued. What was it like being in the band at that point?
It was good fun, particularly doing *Heavy Traffic*. There are times when you're aware that the public go off you en masse, then something happens and it's all great again. That was a period when we were okay.

Does it annoy you, coming in and out of fashion like that?
It annoys me and it hurts somewhat. One of the things that made me agree to do [Quo's 2019 album] *Backbone* was the amount of naysayers. When we split from Alan [Lancaster, original bassist] years ago, people said: "They'll be no good without him." That made Rick [Parfitt, guitarist] and I dig our fucking heels in. Same thing when Rick died: "No good? Well try this, then." But acts come in and out of fashion all the time. The Stones, Reggie…

Reggie?
Elton John. I'm not supposed to call him that because he gets upset, but I can't help it, that's what I know him as. I remember years ago, we bumped into him coming out of the studio that Pye Records had. He'd just done a cover of *Down The Dustpipe* for one of those cheap albums they put out. And three weeks later he was this megastar. Brilliant songwriter. He once said to us: "I wish I could write them rock songs like you do." I just went: "What? Don't be silly Reg, for fuck's sake."

Sir Elton John, Sir Rod Stewart, Sir Mick Jagger. Are you jealous that it's not Sir Francis Rossi?
If you want the truth, just before we got the gong [in 2010, Rossi and Parfitt received OBEs for services to music], I was told by a certain individual that we were due for the *other* gong [a knighthood]. And Rick was a naughty boy, as usual. Whenever it was imperative that he behave, he couldn't. I can't tell you what he did, but it wasn't particularly good. So it was a case of: "You can't have that one, but you can have this one instead."

You gave up smoking dope a few years ago. Was it easier than quitting booze and cocaine?
Booze and cocaine were easy. I never liked drinking much anyway – didn't like the taste. With cocaine, we were in Nassau [in the Bahamas], and you would not believe how easy it was to get hold of coke out there. One day I thought: "I'm not going to have any toot until the night before a day off." And then I ended up thinking: "No, I'll wait until the *next* time I have a day off." And I just got into a routine of not having it. Dope was harder. I miss it, but I daren't do it now. It's so strong now I'm frightened of it.

You did some spoken-word shows over the last couple of years, on the back of your autobiography *I Talk Too Much*. Did you enjoy them?
Immensely. I realised that I do like to talk. I'd like to do more of them in the future. But then again, it's weird me saying: "What I hope we can do…" Where the fuck do you think you're going, you're seventy-three?! Part of me wonders if I should slow down, but I have a fear just like everyone else: how will I finance my old age? We've got all the various crises coming, and I can't help worrying about that.

You auctioned off a beloved Telecaster for £125,000 a few years ago. Did you treat you and the wife to a nice holiday?
No, I gave a bit to charity, a load to tax… It just disappears into the system. You say 'beloved', but only to a point. It was getting difficult to tune, and the best way of stopping me from hanging on to it was to sell it. If you'd told me in the early seventies that I'd sell something for a hundred and twenty-five grand I'd have said: "Don't be fucking silly. If you had that kind of money you'd retire." Of course, you can't retire on that these days.

Speaking of retirement, original Quo drummer John Coghlan is playing some farewell dates. Is there part of you…
No.

…that fancies getting on stage with him one last time?
No, is the answer. I wish John all the best, but I can't do that shit. It feels maudlin to me.

Do you miss Rick and late Quo bassist Alan Lancaster?
I miss that thing you have when you're a young band and it's you against the world. Obviously there were rough times even then, but there was something pioneering to it all: [makes fanfare noise] "Da-da-daaaahh! Here we go!" I miss my relationship with Rick in the early days. But then you get older and you become successful and you change, no matter what people say. What got to Rick was that it wasn't enough for him. He wanted to be where I was standing.

Have you got another Status Quo album in you?
We've got one in us. Whether we'll do one or not, I don't know.

What's stopping you?
Spotify. It's even worse than it was when we were all getting ripped off in the sixties. It makes you sound mercenary saying it, but it's something we've sweated over and they're giving you a quarter of a penny per stream? Fuck you. So do I think there'll be another Status Quo album? No, I don't.

Quo'ing In – The Best Of The Noughties is out now via earMusic. Heavy Traffic and Riffs are out now via UMC.

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Tuk Smith (second left) and company: restless by name, restless by nature.

ALYSSE GAFKJEN/PRESS

6 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT...

Tuk Smith & The Restless Hearts

From punk rock madness to shelved studio albums, Tuk Smith has had no choice but to embrace the chaos.

Words: **Dave Everley**

TUK SMITH HAS spent much of the last few years picking himself up, dusting himself down and starting over again. First there was the dissolution of his old band, Atlanta rock'n'roll outlaws Biters, ground down by tensions with their label Earache. Then there was the debut solo album he recorded for new label, Better Noise, only for the record to be shelved and the deal dissolved. Then there was the pandemic-related double cancellation of the Mötley Crüe/Def Leppard tour, which Smith was due to open (he wasn't on the bill when it finally got going this year). But he's bounced back with a brand-new album, *Ballad Of A Misspent Youth*, credited to Tuk Smith And The Restless Hearts. "It hasn't been easy at times," he says. "But 'not easy' is pretty much my life."

The last couple of years have been a beatdown, mentally and physically.
After Biters split in 2018, Smith wrote 40 songs for his solo debut, signing up big-name producer Rob Cavallo (Green Day/My Chemical Romance) to work on it. And then… nothing. Legal issues mean he can't go into details of why it was shelved indefinitely, but that turbulent period resulted in *Ballad Of A Misspent Youth*. "I was so fucking upset but motivated by the situation," he says. "I had to prove to myself I could write another record: how much gas is left in the tank?"

He hit his credit card to make the new album.
After one false start, it wouldn't have been surprising if Smith had been cautious with the follow-up. Not so. "I was just, like, 'Fuck labels, fuck everybody – I'm gonna put it all on my credit card,'" he says. "When I wrote it and recorded it, there was no record label, there was no committee, there was no talk of algorithms or playlists." The gamble paid off – the album is released on Smith's own label MRG via Virgin. "Just having the freedom to make the record I wanted to make was awesome. I didn't have to deal with any bullshit."

***Ballad Of A Misspent Youth* isn't autobiographical. But then again, it kind of is…**
"Feelgood, ripping music," is how Smith describes the songs, but lyrically he was influenced by rock'n'roll's great storytellers: Springsteen, Petty, Bob Seger and his all-time hero, Phil Lynott. Growing up in rural Georgia, he had plenty of inspiration to draw on from his own misspent youth. "It was super fucking crazy," he says. "I was thrown out of school multiple times, always getting into fights, always on probation." He moved to Atlanta to immerse himself in the punk rock scene. "It was fucked up. I look back and go, 'How the fuck am I still alive?' I was just fearless."

Smith doesn't romanticise the dark side of rock'n'roll.
"I sing a lot about cautionary tales," says Smith. One of these is *Everybody Loves You When You're Dead*, an unvarnished commentary on rock'n'roll's in-built fatalism. "I haven't seen the glamorous side of rock'n'roll," he admits. "I've lost quite a few of my friends from overdoses, suicide. It's not like a movie where there's people to drive you round and take care of you. I'm not trashing the lifestyle, but it's not something I want to promote. It's sad, man."

Rock'n'roll itself is alive and well, but the music industry doesn't care.
Back at the start of his solo career, Smith and his manager shopped their demo around to more than 40 labels – none of whom bit. "One major label that shall remain nameless said: 'How do you feel about putting trap and hip hop beats in the music?'" says Smith, laughing. "I would not know where to fucking start." He worries rock'n'roll itself will struggle without label support. "The bands that are big business, like the Stones and whoever, aren't gonna be around forever, but labels aren't putting anything in place for the younger generations. If I think about it too much, I'll lose my fucking mind."

Quitting isn't an option for Tuk Smith.
Ballad Of A Misspent Youth isn't the only thing to emerge from the explosion of frustrated energy that erupted after his first solo album was shelved: he's already written and demoed another record. "It's a concept album about redemption, cos that feels like where I'm at." Given the bullshit he's been through, what keeps him going? "I wish you could fucking tell me," he says. "Some days, I go, 'Why can't I just be a normal person and get into fucking tech or coding?' But I love rock'n'roll so much: the music, the history, the fashion. There's no way I'm stepping away from this."

Ballad Of A Misspent Youth is out on November 4 via MRG.

NICE GUYS *Don't Always* FINISH LAST

It's been "a fight from day one", say **Alter Bridge**'s Mark Tremonti and Myles Kennedy, but now they are now reaping the rewards. The pair are also living proof that you don't have to be an asshole to sell loads of records, pack out stadiums and be a rock star in 2022.

Words: **Paul Brannigan** Portraits: **Rob Blackham**

They say you never forget your first time. And the broad smile that creases Myles Kennedy's ruggedly handsome face as fragmented recollections of a red-letter day coalesce and come into focus rather telegraphs his subsequent admission that he treasures the memory as a transformative moment in his life. A practised, unhurried storyteller, he leans forward to sketch out the scene with broad strokes. It's 1984, and in Spokane, Washington, Alter Bridge's future frontman – at this point a 14-year-old schoolboy – is set to perform in front of an audience for the first time.

"My friends and I had formed an 'air' band, and we'd told everyone that we were going to play a gig without any instruments," Kennedy explains. "We set up in the church pianist's basement, and our parents thought it was going to be really cute, so everyone was like: 'Let's go downstairs and watch the kids play!'"

At the appointed hour, Kennedy's step-father, a minister in the Methodist church, invited his congregation to join him for a very special musical performance. Descending into the basement, the unsuspecting churchgoers were greeted by a demonic cacophony that Satan himself might have considered 'a bit much' when selecting his walk-on music for Judgement Day.

The passing of time has done nothing to dull Kennedy's gleeful memory of what happened next, as he watched familiar smiling faces darken in confusion, horror and disgust.

"What they didn't realise was that our set-list featured only full-on metal," he explains. "*Shout At The Devil, Screaming For Vengeance,* Iron Maiden… It took literally two songs to clear the entire room. It was wonderful."

To his eternal credit, pastor Kennedy took the prank in good humour, and sustained only minor damage to his reputation in the local community. Known simply as Glenn to the two boys he raised as his own following the untimely death of their father Richard Bass, his laid-back, supportive approach to parenting will forever make him ⊳

a "hero" in the eyes of Myles Kennedy. But when, during a family camping trip the following year, the teenager raised the prospect of a second 'air band' performance, the minister, mindful of the boy's growing obsession with the music of Van Halen, Def Leppard and Led Zeppelin, proposed he take on a new challenge.

"I remember he was building a fire, but he stopped, turned around to look at me, and said: 'Son, why don't you learn how to play for real?'" Kennedy recalls. "From that moment, my life had a purpose."

"And fast forward almost forty years," he says, raising his hands, palms outstretched, like a magician who's just pulled off a particularly mesmerising illusion, "here we are."

As fabulously succinct as this first-hand account of Kennedy's musical journey is, we'd be doing Alter Bridge's 52-year-old frontman a grave disservice by wrapping up the story at this point. Because when he proclaims the epic title track of his band's new album *Pawns & Kings* "a battle-cry for the underdog", urging '*Don't let the bastards grind you down*', this is not the empty posturing of a performative rock'n'roll entertainer, but a heart-felt sentiment born of lived experience, wisdom gained from years of hurt, frustration and disappointment chasing his dreams.

When a disillusioned, burnt out, bruised and weary Kennedy tried to quit the music business 20 years ago after recording a second album with the Mayfield Four – records a trusted friend later admitting to feeling "uncomfortable" listening to, given Kennedy's compulsion to lay bare unvarnished truths – it was an act of self-sabotage as much as self-care, a decision that went against every fibre of his being.

"It's a brutal business, brutal," he admits. "But no matter how bad my heart would break, I just couldn't stop. I kept getting back on the horse, like a dumb-ass. I told myself the dream was over many, many, many times, but I couldn't let go, because I understood the power of music. So finally I walked away [laughs]. And that didn't work out either!"

This, obviously, is a little joke. Today, in the bar of an upscale West London hotel, Kennedy and the man who fucked up his early retirement plan, his co-pilot in Alter Bridge, bullet-headed 48-year-old guitarist Mark Tremonti, will hold court until darkness falls, for a steady procession of print, online and broadcast media journalists eager to learn the stories behind *Pawns & Kings*, the band's seventh studio album, just released on the Berlin-based label Napalm Records.

A little subdued and slow to spark following a decidedly less than restful, jet-lag-impacted first night in the UK, the pair, both clad head to toe in regulation black, are nonetheless attentive, gracious and professionally charming in their early-afternoon interactions with each representative of the media, as per their reputations as two of rock's 'good guys'.

"I don't think I'm some cool badass. I'd feel like a pretentious asshole calling myself a rock star."

Mark Tremonti

"You got me at a good time," Kennedy says with a gentle smile as he settles himself on a sofa, the first of the pair to do so. "I'm so tired that I'll just blurt out everything, and get myself in trouble."

We both know this won't happen.

In truth, if we're laying our cards on the table here, almost everyone involved in today's polite and polished promotional dance – Kennedy, Tremonti, Alter Bridge's long-time manager Tim, hovering discreetly at all times, their UK PR team, and all but the most green, fresh-faced media reps – knows that the two musicians don't really *need* to be here today. Alter Bridge are not, and never will be, rent-a-quote press darlings. And given the loyalty of their impressively dedicated fan base, the commercial success of *Pawns & Kings*, in the UK at least, will fluctuate only by small margins

irrespective of the weight, reach or range of whatever pre-release promo activity is listed on today's schedule.

Which isn't to say that Tremonti is being anything but entirely sincere when he says that days such as today play a pivotal role in raising awareness of Alter Bridge's follow-up to 2019's *Walk The Sky*. "We want to make the most of this record," he states, "as the last one got destroyed by covid, touring-wise." One can't help feeling that he and Kennedy could spend every allotted minute of their media 'face time' on anything they wanted to and *Pawns & Kings* would still debut in the UK Top 10, just as each of the four studio albums they released in the last decade – 2010's *AB III* (chart peak No.9), 2013's *Fortress* (No.6), 2016's *The Last Hero* (No.3) and the aforementioned *Walk The Sky* (No.4) – did. Because this is the standard level at which the Florida-based quartet, arguably the most reliable and trusted blue-chip, arena-filling hard rock act on the circuit, now operate. Factor in projected sales of more than 90,000 tickets for the band's winter British and Irish tour (commencing on December 5 at Nottingham's 10,000-capacity Motorpoint Arena, and winding up a week later at London's 20,000-capacity O2 Arena) and it's clear that in the eighteenth year of their career Alter Bridge are A Big Fucking Deal.

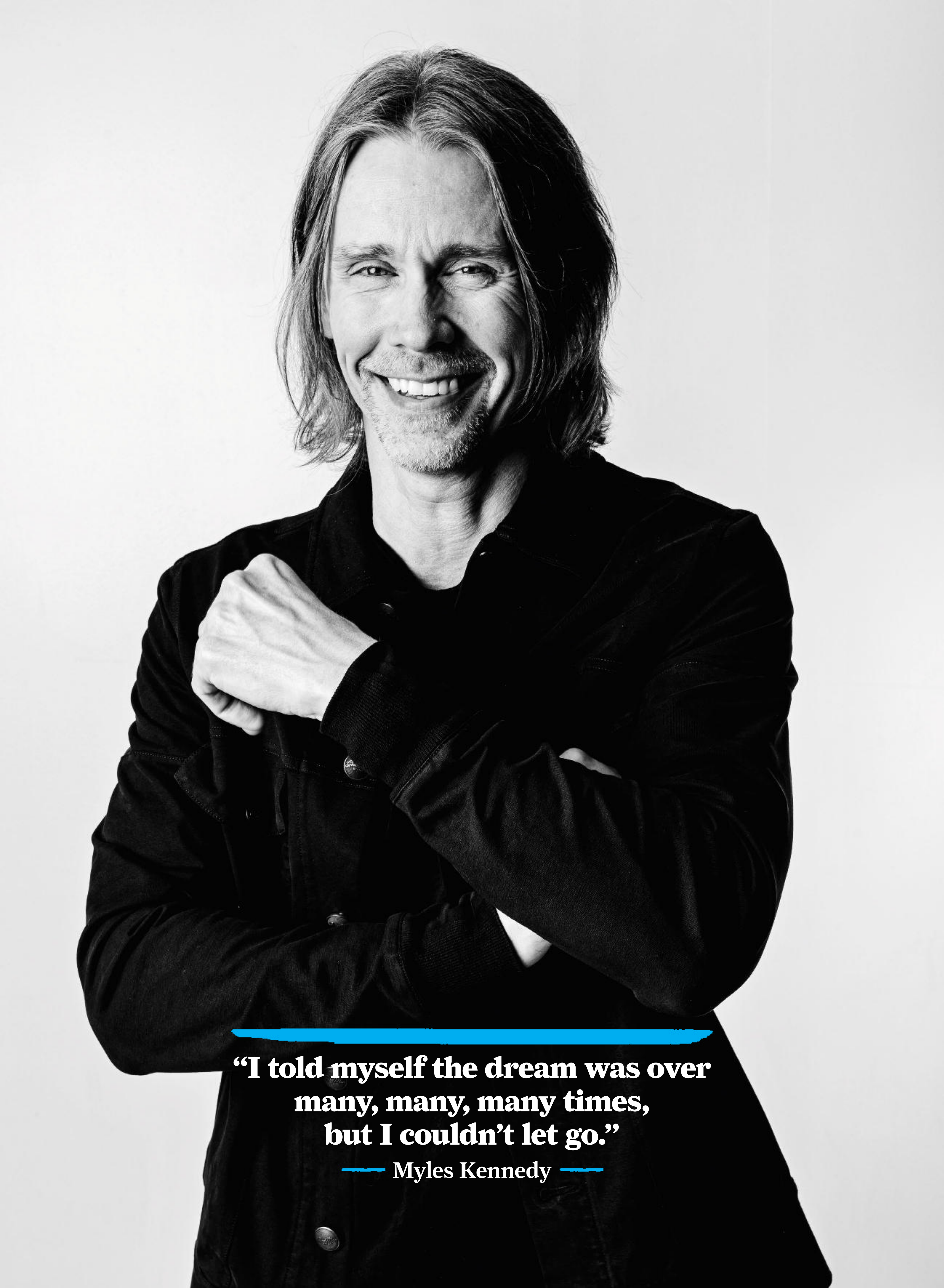
And yet the traditional peripheral indicators that accompany this level of success are almost entirely absent here. There are no paparazzi skulking near the hotel's revolving doors, no Alter Bridge loyalists camped in the shrubbery in the hope of grabbing selfies to get Instagram fan-pages popping, no hotel residents interrupting our conversation to ask for an autograph. As the hotel bar fills up, fellow guests curious as to the duo's identity might peg the long-haired Kennedy as a 'creative', a painter perhaps, or a photographer, or imagine the tattoo- and piercings-free Tremonti to be here for an interview for a security job or evening bar shifts. This anonymity, in these surroundings at least, is a sweet spot that suits Kennedy, Tremonti and their absent bandmates Brian Marshall and Scott Phillips just fine, thank you very much.

"Do I want world domination with Alter Bridge?" Myles Kennedy asks aloud. "Thanks, but no. Because I see the complications that it brings into people's worlds. This is the best place for us to be.

"My brother and I sometimes talk about this, actually. He'll say to me: 'Do you realise how lucky you are? You can go anywhere, eat anywhere, shop anywhere, without being recognised or getting bothered, and then you can go play music to an arena full of people. You have the best of both worlds!' "For me, this altitude is a beautiful place in which to fly," he says, smiling again. "And honestly, I wouldn't trade it for the world."

At an unspecified point in his late 20s/early 30s, a time when even fewer people knew his face or his name, Kennedy woke up to the realisation that like-minded souls in his orbit were "disappearing".

"Losing friends to addiction was a real wake-up call for me," he reflects, his gratitude evident. "It came at a time when I was starting to change, ▷



“I told myself the dream was over many, many, many times, but I couldn’t let go.”

— Myles Kennedy —

“When this is over, and I look back on what Alter Bridge was, I’ll be able to tell my grandkids that we stayed true to ourselves.”

— Mark Tremonti —

hanging out with the wrong crowd, falling into those rock'n'roll clichés. Playing music, from my first band Bittersweet onwards, I discovered that all those temptations laid bare in [infamous book that detailed Led Zeppelin's excess all areas] *Hammer Of The Gods* were freely available even if you weren't in Led Zeppelin. Luckily, before darkness descended I met the woman who would become my wife, and changed my ways, telling myself let's not go down that road. But in different circumstances? Sure, I could have fallen for all that craziness."

"I think part of the allure is that we are more – for lack of a better word – pedestrian, that we don't have that swagger."

Myles Kennedy

With the practised caution of a seasoned world traveller anticipating regular border checks in his near future, when asked to declare which specific 'recreational' vices might have impacted hardest upon his health and happiness during his deepest immersion in rock'n'roll cliches, Kennedy smiles, shrugs and says: "I plead the Fifth [Amendment] on that." It's no secret that the Seattle rock scene of the early-to-mid-90s was awash with heroin; Mother Love Bone's Andrew Wood and Alice In Chains' Layne Staley just two of its high-profile casualties. And while Spokane's less-celebrated artistic community never succumbed wholesale to its dark, intoxicating 'glamour', as a younger man Kennedy wasn't blind to the ready availability, and indeed allure, of certain illegal narcotics.

"There were drugs around," he acknowledges, "and for me there was an experimental phase with that. But I definitely realised that this would be something that would most definitely get in the way of me being creative. What I saw with drugs was people being fooled into believing they were being more creative than they were. When I was lucid, I'd watch that, and think: 'You're fooling yourself.' I never imagined drugs would bring out the best in me.

"Which is not to say that I don't understand their use. The other day, my wife, who's a massive Depeche Mode fan, watched the concert documentary [*101*] they shot in the late eighties as they were travelling across America. At one point, [frontman] Dave Gahan was asked if he was happy. And he replied saying something to the effect of: 'Yeah. But I was also happy when I was working at a grocery store.' The pressure of being a frontman every night can be so overwhelming. And then it makes total sense why some guys get hooked on drugs and alcohol, or face the mental health issues that arise from this lifestyle. It's a tricky dance if you don't want to end up another rock'n'roll statistic."

Mark Tremonti knows this as well as anyone. As a beaten-down Myles Kennedy was pulling the plug on The Mayfield Four, Tremonti, was wrestling with an altogether different, although no less brutal, Big Life Decision: whether or not to walk away from America's then-biggest rock band, Creed, which he's poured his heart and soul into for the best part of 10 years.

Creed's phenomenal success had already far outstripped the most outlandish, fantastical dreams the teenage Tremonti ever entertained while honing his guitar chops beneath the Metallica and Slayer and Iron Maiden posters on his bedroom walls. Remarkable, then, that revised in 2022 Creed's sales figures in the US alone are almost incomprehensible: between 1997 and their break-up in 2004, the Tallahassee, Florida band sold 28 million albums, and their second and third – 1999's *Human Clay* and 2001's *Weathered* – both debuted at No.1 on the *Billboard* 200 chart.

By 2002, however, the relationship between Tremonti and Creed vocalist Scott Stapp was so damaged, in part due to Stapp's escalating issues with alcohol abuse and cocaine addiction, that the guitarist couldn't stand a single second in Stapp's company. Even now there's anger in Tremonti's voice when he revisits memories of a dream turned sour.

"I've had jobs that were shit," he says, "terrible jobs that I hated showing up for, but this was different. When you have this passion you've had your whole life, and you achieve the kind of huge success you always dreamt of, but you have this factor that's tearing it apart, that's destroying your whole life, it's the most heart-wrenching, terrible thing. And I resented it. As a kid I could not imagine being in a successful band that was not fun to be in. But it got to the point where every other week Scott Phillips was quitting and I was begging him to stay, or I was quitting and he was begging me to stay. And then one day we both wanted to quit, and that was it. We had to think about what would really make us happy: making another platinum record with a band you hated being a part of, or being an artist and chasing new dreams. We felt we'd earned the right to be happy."

Level headed, good humoured and personable, Tremonti comes across as a thoroughly decent human being, with an inner steel underpinning a calm, composed character. You sense he'd make a good brother-in-law, and you'd definitely want him on your side in a fight. It perhaps surprising, then, to hear him say that he still feels like an outsider – not wholly comfortable in either rock'n'roll circles or 'normal' life. "I don't think I'm some cool badass, and I'd feel like a pretentious asshole calling myself a rock star." At his lowest ebb, he wasn't about to let Scott Stapp destroy his dreams, so he went in search of a singer who was the exact opposite of his egotistic, arrogant, confrontational former bandmate, personality-wise. Which is when he approached "the nicest guy we knew" with an offer to start a new band, to take a leap of faith without knowing where it might take them.

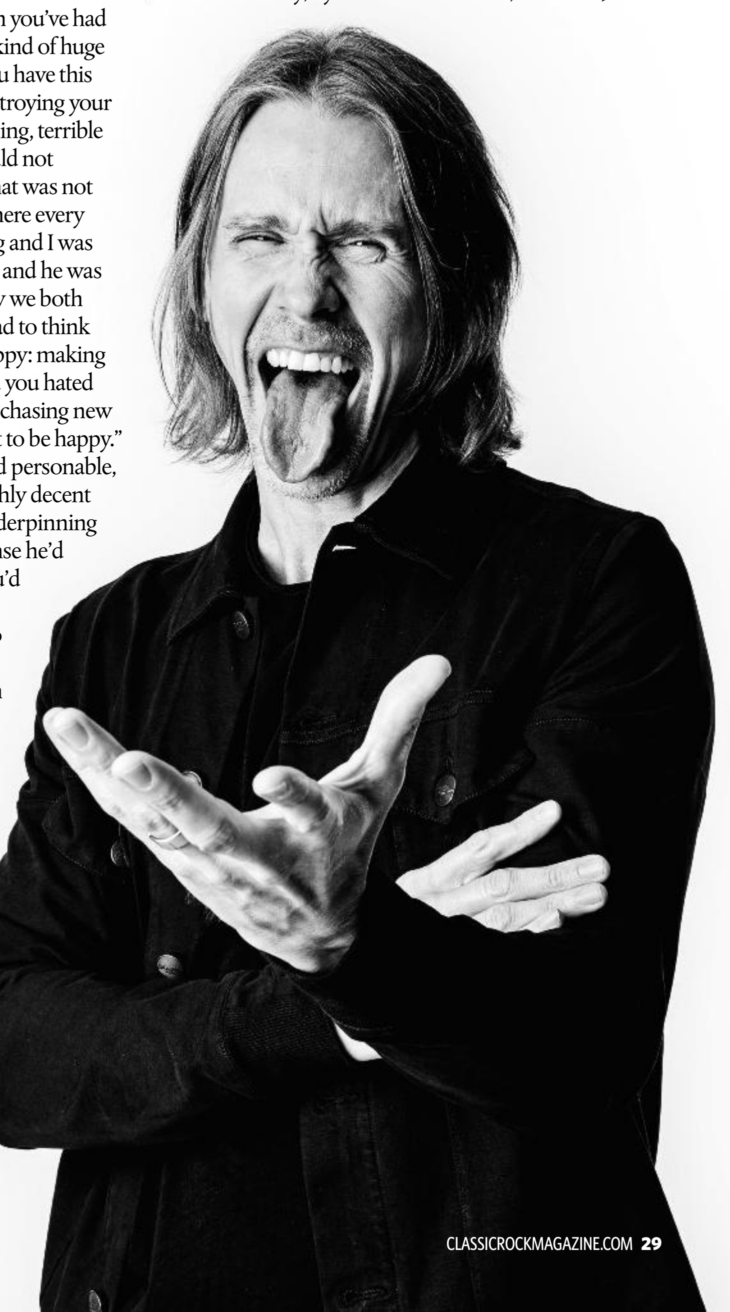
As a kid, growing up in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, the guitarist was taught by his parents to fear only one thing: the city six blocks from their family home, just down Alter Road.

"I was constantly told: 'Do not cross that street!" Tremonti recalls. "Where we lived was a vision of suburbia, whereas Detroit, to my parents, was drugs, crime, depravity, danger. It was not nice, it was not safe. Growing up, Alter Road, to me, represented the unknown. And in walking away from Creed, from everything we knew, we had to cross into the unknown again. So that was the start of Alter Bridge."

Tremonti and Kennedy use the same word to describe how they view music: the word 'magic'. But no one waved a magic wand to lift Alter Bridge into the elevated realm in which they exist in 2022 – a fact that the hard-working Tremonti, now with 17 albums to his name, is quick to stress.

"Alter Bridge has been a fight from day one," he says. "Everything we've achieved with this band, we've earned it. We had a lot of proving to do, a lot of negative energy to overcome."

For Kennedy, by his own admission, some of ▷



Alter Bridge at London's Royal Albert Hall in 2017: (l-r) Scott Phillips, Mark Tremonti, Myles Kennedy, Brian Marshall.

JOHN MCMURTRIE

that negativity came from within. Growing up on a farm, shovelling horse shit as he listened to the greatest rock albums of the 70s and 80s, he knew he could never be a golden god like Robert Plant, a showman like Freddie Mercury, a fearless boundary breaker like David Bowie. And when he first heard David Lee Roth, still the archetype for rock'n'roll frontmen, singing Van Halen's take on The Kinks classic *You Really Got Me*, he was rendered speechless: "I remember thinking: 'Wow! It sounds like he's having sex in outer space.'" And while Seattle's grunge explosion offered reassurance that rock music could be made by guys who looked, thought and lived like Kennedy did, a part of him always felt that he had to be more than Myles Kennedy, bigger than Myles Kennedy, louder than Myles Kennedy in order to make it.

"I was watching a rock'n'roll documentary recently where a music writer said something, referring to frontmen and that larger-than-life rock-star persona, which really stuck with me. He said: 'People don't pay to see the humble bumble.' And I get that. That kind of swagger is entertaining and compelling, and I love to watch people who have it."

Now, when he looks back on his early years with Alter Bridge, Kennedy remembers an uncertain, anxious introvert trying to pull off a decent impression of a rock star. "I tried and I tried, but I could never quite find that persona," he says. "And looking back, it's embarrassing. I felt like an imposter, and I felt like people knew it too, like they were looking at me thinking: 'This guy is bullshitting me.' They maybe didn't believe in me as a rock star, because I didn't believe in me either."

Kennedy remembers the exact point at which he gave up pretending to be someone else, and embraced, and started to rather like, who he is. And once again the catalyst for change came after a conversation with his step-father Glenn, backstage after a 2014 show with his side hustle, fronting Slash & The Conspirators.

"We were opening for Aerosmith," he recalls, "and it was one of the first shows I played with Slash in front of my parents, so I was kinda operating with that rock guy persona. Then after the show I'm hanging out, and my step-dad pulled me aside and said: 'You know, just don't forget who you are.' And man, that was an important moment for me. Because at that point I realised: 'You know what, I'm just gonna be me up there, and if people like it, great, if they don't that's fine too. And since I started doing that, I finally felt comfortable in my skin."

"Alter Bridge has been a fight from day one. Everything we've achieved, we've earned it."

Mark Tremonti

It's at this point that I suggest, perhaps a little rudely, that when the name Alter Bridge is raised in music industry circles, the words "such lovely, genuine guys…" is often followed by a pause, an embarrassed shuffle of feet, a lowering of the voice, and a somewhat apologetic "…but kinda boring".

To their credit, on hearing this, Kennedy and Tremonti both laugh out loud.

"Look," says Kennedy, "I totally get that. And if I didn't know me and didn't have to live in my shoes, I'd probably say the same thing. But for people that do embrace what we do, I think that's part of the allure: that we are more – for lack of a better word – pedestrian, that we don't have that swagger. But to pretend to be anything other than who we are would take so much energy, would be so exhausting day after day."

"If you want to make it in music, you better have a thick skin, because people aren't slow to tell you what they think of you," Tremonti says with a shrug that suggests he's not losing sleep about anyone's perception of him or his band. "We are who we are."

The guitarist is silent for a moment, perhaps considering whether or not to share a story that cuts to the heart of why Alter Bridge is important to him, and why this band and their music is important to so many others. In the end, he takes the plunge. He recalls a meet-and-greet session with fans, when a young couple shuffled forward, both crying, overcome with emotion.

"Meet-and-greets aren't the best situations in which to have a proper conversation," he admits, "and it was a little awkward for all of us. But we talked, and they relaxed a little, and then they pulled out a photograph. They told me that they'd lost a child, and showed me the photo, which showed the child's gravestone, which featured our lyrics. That's the power that music can have in someone's life. So it's important to me that what we do is real. When people have our lyrics tattooed on their skin, or in that case, carved in stone, you don't want to betray their trust in you, and turn into a clown."

"When this is all over, and I look back on what Alter Bridge was, I'll be able to tell my grandkids that we stayed true to ourselves," Tremonti concludes. "We didn't put on costumes, we didn't fake it; we fought, and we survived. And we made music that was honest, and that mattered, to us and to our fans. Whatever happens with this album, and however our lives unfold from this point on, that will be enough for me."

Pawns & Kings is out now via Napalm Records.

“Do I want world domination with Alter Bridge? Thanks, but no.”

— Myles Kennedy

ALLAN BALLARD/PRESS

RAISE YOUR FIST AND YELL

It was the final album the Three Amigos line-up of **Motörhead** made – and wasn't their best. *Iron Fist*, which even Lemmy said was "inferior to anything else we've ever done", marked the end of the band's golden period.

Words: **Mick Wall**

For the rest of his life, Lemmy would look back on the aftermath of Motörhead's crowning glory with their 1981 album *No Sleep 'Til Hammersmith* and protest that it wasn't his fault they could never follow it up.

"The trouble is, you can't follow a live album that went straight in at Number One," he said. "I mean, what do you do? You can't put out another live album. And you can't follow it with a studio album because that's been the live album people have been waiting for for five years, right? So we were fucked whatever we did. We could have done the best studio album in the world and we would have been fucked. Except we didn't, we did *Iron Fist*."

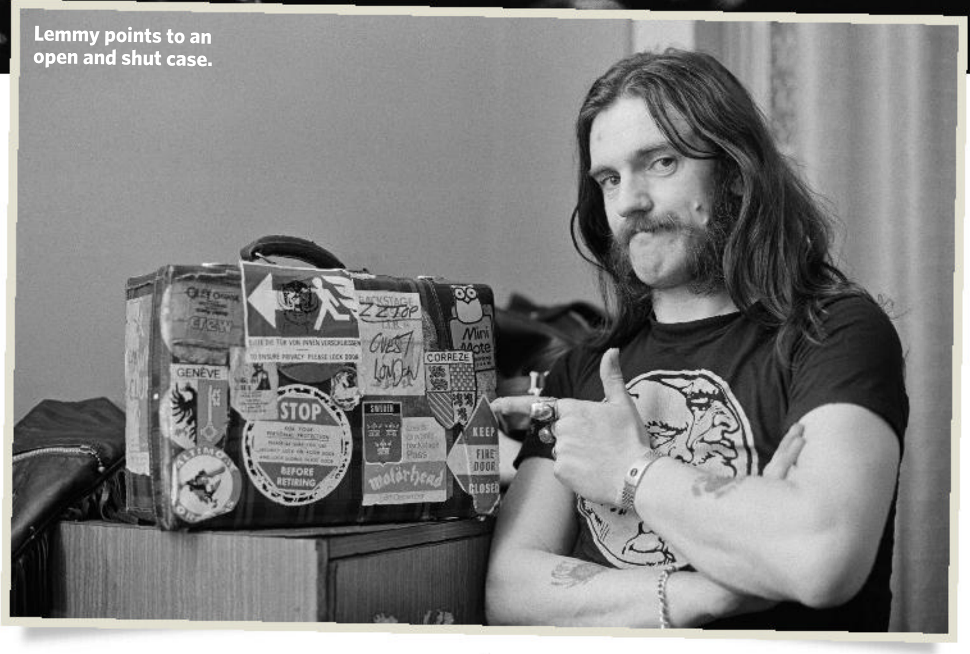
In reality, no one wanted or expected another live album. What Motörhead's fans did expect was a new album as good as the previous three, the unholy trinity of *Overkill*, *Bomber* and *Ace Of Spades*. What no one saw coming was *Iron Fist*, 12 tracks light on inspiration and spirit, overloaded with arrogance and disaffection. Exactly the kind of ill-starred, done-quick, out-of-control album that events leading up to its creation all but guaranteed.

As guitarist 'Fast' Eddie Clarke told me: "*Iron Fist* was the toughest because we were getting low on ideas and things were getting strained."

Drummer Phil 'Philthy Animal' Taylor was particularly affected by the onrush of fame, Eddie claimed.

"Lemmy was not himself, either…"

Motörhead at Newcastle City Hall, March 22, 1982.



Lemmy points to an open and shut case.

> **"The trouble is you can't follow a live album that went straight in at number one. I mean, what do you do?"**
>
> **Lemmy**

Indeed, Lemmy had begun to delight his ego just a tad too much of late. Playing the biggest show of their career so far, headlining a six-band line-up billed as the Heavy Metal Barndance at Bingley Hall in Stafford, in 1981, Lemmy collapsed halfway through; the rest of the show was cancelled.

"Lemmy's been up for three days drinking vodka," said a still pissed-off Clarke. "He's been fucking chicks all day and we've got twelve thousand kids crammed waiting for us. All day people have been offering me lines of coke, and I've only had one fucking Heineken because I want to be together for this show.

"Fifty-five minutes into the set, Lemmy disappears backwards, collapses on the stage. Me and Phil are furious. 'You let us down, you c**t!' And he's saying: 'Me being up for three nights has nothing to do with it.' Of course not!"

The irony was that the show received an ecstatic review in *Melody Maker*, whose reviewer thought it the most marvellous theatre.

"I said to Phil: 'Suddenly we're the definitive live band. They were calling us c**ts last week,'" Lemmy said, chewing a cigarette.

As Mick Farren, who'd known Lemmy since Hawkwind days, co-writing songs with him, observed: "We were all exceedingly badly behaved. We all took far too many drugs. Lemmy took more speed than any human being I've ever seen. We probably deserved to go to jail many times over."

In fact, they very nearly did when the band suffered a series of busts in the run-up to the release of *Iron Fist* in April 1982. The first and most serious, after a four-night run at London's Hammersmith Odeon, was when all three had their homes raided by the drugs squad.

"Turned out the cops had been at the gig every night of the Hammersmith run," their former manager Doug Smith recalls. "They even bought T-shirts from the stall, to look like punters. Then at six the morning, after the final show, twenty-six officers rammed open my front door – took it off the hinges. Another seventy of them went to the hotel where the crew were. They did Lemmy's flat, too, but Lemmy wasn't there. As usual he got away with it because he was out snorting and drinking in the St Moritz club in Soho, on the fruit machine. Next morning he goes: 'Oh, I didn't know this all happened, Doug.'"

Away from the stage there were also growing disputes over money. As far as the band were concerned, they'd just had a No.1 album with *No Sleep* and should be rich. Yet they were all still on a weekly wage of £250. Despite sold-out concert halls in Britain and Europe, Smith points out that

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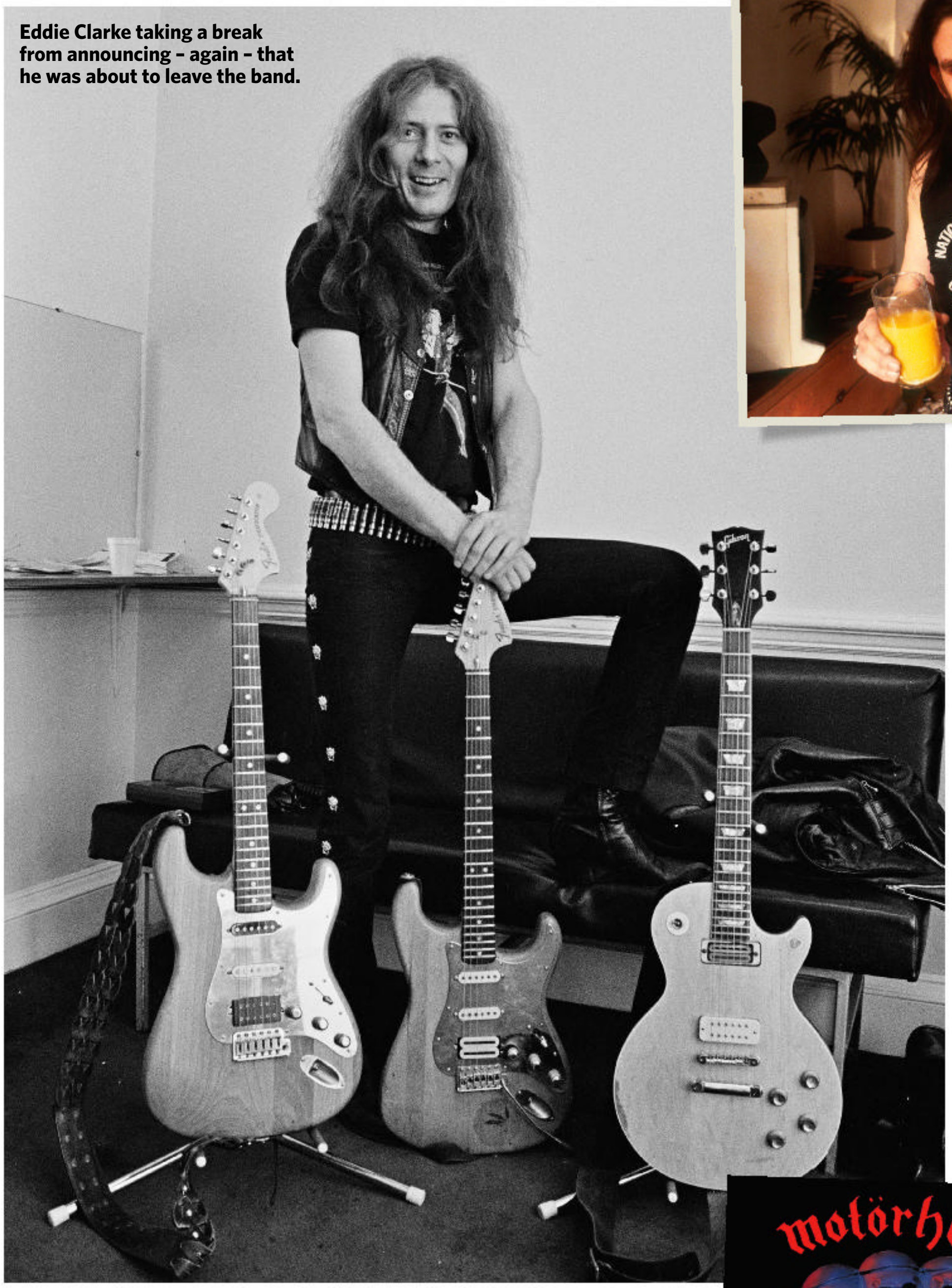

Eddie Clarke taking a break from announcing – again – that he was about to leave the band.

"This is pure orange juice. Are you trying to kill me?!

"*Iron Fist* was the toughest because we were getting low on ideas and things were getting strained."

Eddie Clarke

"the majority of the tours didn't make a lot of money. The merchandising made a lot of money. When the band really got into problems, the merchandising company lent them £36,000, which they never saw again. Eddie would moan: 'Where did all the merchandising money go, Doug?' Eddie, you had it. 'Well, we never saw any of it.' No, you never saw any of it. We just paid your fucking bills!"

Doug had "protected" Motörhead: "They always had money to go on the road." Which was all Lemmy cared about. "Lemmy wasn't really interested in money. Just what was in his pocket. As long as he had an unlimited amount to spend on machines or whatever…" The 'whatever' being speed and whisky, obvs.

Eddie, though, was having none of it, and on more than one occasion threatened to leave the band, an almost weekly occurrence, according to Lemmy. He recalled Eddie 'leaving' once on tour in France. Panicked label chiefs flew over in a charter plane and eventually Eddie was talked out of it.

"Much against his better nature and all that shit," Lemmy frowned. "The only thing they didn't do was promise him more money. If he'd had any sense he would have held out for that."

Doug Smith tells of an occasion in LA when Eddie phoned, ranting and raving. "The fucking band left the gig without me! I had no fucking car to get back to the hotel! I had to get a fucking taxi and the driver tried to kidnap me and take me to Mexico! I'm leaving the band!"

Doug took a breath, then "very calmly said: 'Eddie, I understand all that, but my wife has just gone into labour.' He went: 'Oh, sorry. I'll leave the band next week, then…'"

This was the disaster zone backdrop to what would become the benighted *Iron Fist*, the last album the classic Three Amigos line-up of Motörhead would ever make – and easily the worst.

"Eddie and Phil were always having fistfights," Lemmy told me. "At one point, I've separated them cos it's time to go onstage and on the way down the stairs Phil's hit Eddie round the head with a fucking drumstick and it's started again. In Glasgow they rolled on the floor into the elevator. The doors shut and they're still fighting."

He lit another cigarette. "Bands are very fragile things. If they're not getting enough money there's not much to hold them together except trust, and very few bands trust each other after about the first year. They're all in it for themselves. And that's what I tried to fight in Motörhead. I wanted it to be a band that believed in what we do and believed that we're valid. Every great band goes through that shit. We just did it for longer."

They had been together for nearly seven years when they arrived in the studio to make *Iron Fist*. "We were sick to death of each other by then," Phil told me. "But it wasn't exactly new. Lemmy had always been an arsehole. Eddie was always a fucking pain."

Lemmy later claimed that it was during this spell that Eddie "stole one of my birds". When I reminded him, Eddie shook his head and laughed. According to Smith, "Lemmy didn't really have relationships. Girls were just something Lemmy shagged. There was very little love there."

When Eddie took up an offer to produce an album for a new powerhouse trio called Tank, that had supported Motörhead on tour, Lemmy began calling Eddie 'Fancy Bollocks'. It was a situation that became even more tense when Taylor suggested Fancy Bollocks also produce the next Motörhead album.

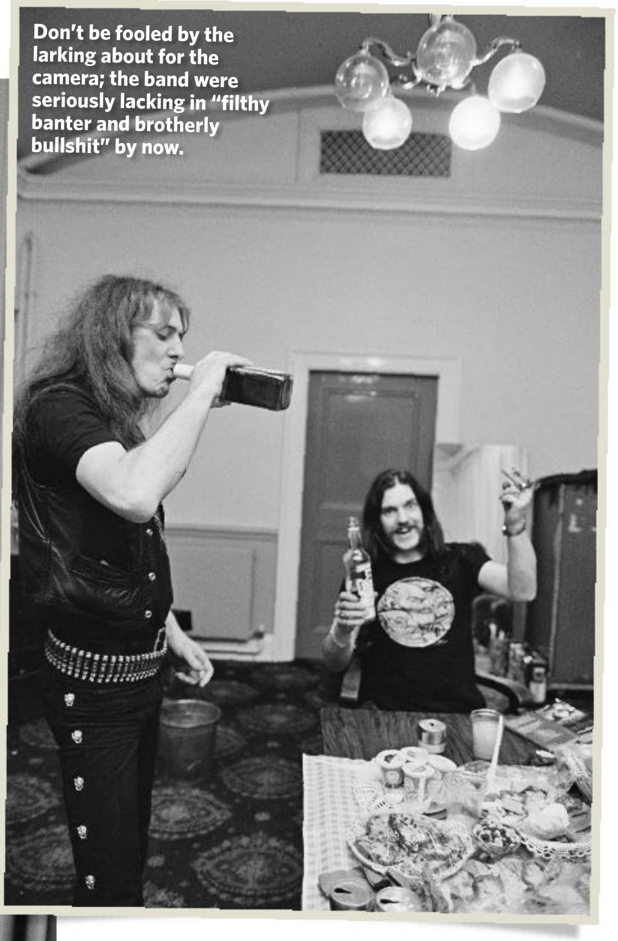
Originally the plan had been to work with Vic Maile, the man with the golden touch who had produced *No Sleep*, *Ace Of Spades* and *Bomber*. But Taylor and Maile had a big row over a new drum kit, culminating in Taylor issuing the ultimate rock-star ultimatum: "Either he goes, or I do."

The star got his way and Maile was fired.

Taylor again suggested Clarke step in. He'd ▷

GETTY x2

The leather fist of *Iron Fist*: Phil Taylor backstage in Newcastle.



Don't be fooled by the larking about for the camera; the band were seriously lacking in "filthy banter and brotherly bullshit" by now.

done a great job on the Tank album, *Filth Hounds Of Hades*, which had just come out to rave reviews. Lemmy wasn't having it. Other noted producers were approached, but they all wanted top dollar from a band whose last album had gone to No.1. (But were still on £250 a week.)

Lemmy finally caved: "Let Fancy Bollocks produce it, then."

Time was hurriedly booked at Morgan Studios in West London. But Lemmy seemed to be phoning it in. Eddie: "I remember one particular incident. He'd done a wrong note. I said: 'Look, Lem, can we straighten that note out?' He said: 'Oh, man, I ain't got time. I gotta go.' Cos there was some bird sitting there with her legs in the air and he wanted to go to the Speakeasy." Clarke was left with no option but to try to cut in a bass note that he played himself, using strips of razored tape in those pre-computerised analogue days. "That's how much he didn't want to be there."'

Smith recalls Lemmy writing the lyrics to the title track while sitting in the catering room at the studio. "There was a girl there that served behind the counter, never met her before, and he would refer to her. He would write these lyrics, then go: 'What do you think?' She'd just sort of smile and go: 'Yeah, very good.' Another time he sat on the loo and wrote some lyrics as he was having a shit."

Speaking 20 years later to *Classic Rock*'s Dave Ling, Lemmy admitted: "The *Iron Fist* album was bad, inferior to anything else we've ever done. There are at least three songs on there that were completely unfinished. But there you go. We were arrogant. When you're successful, that's what you become. You think it'll go on forever."

"We were sick to death of each other. Lemmy had always been an arsehole. Eddie was always a fking pain."**

Phil Taylor

When *Iron Fist* was released in April 1982 it jumped into the UK chart at No.6 – then a week later began sliding sharply down again. Even the single – the title track and the only half-decent thing on the album – struggled to get into the Top 30 (peaking at No.29), whereas their previous single, a live in-your-face *Motorhead* from *No Sleep*, had reached No.6.

The fact is, *Iron Fist* was a DOA dud. Creatively, the band were running on fumes. The title track, built on the same non-shape-shifting machine-gun bass grumble as *Ace Of Spades*, *Overkill* and so many other earlier classics, makes it on familiarity alone. But it doesn't matter if you ever hear it again.

The other 10 tracks… nothing further to say, Your Honour. Tracks like *I'm The Doctor* – excruciating dad-dancing punk – and *(Don't Let 'Em) Grind You Down* – its payoff line was *"Why don't you tell them to shove it!"* Hardly in the same saloon bar as *"I don't want to live forever!"* – were so shallow-end they barely got your feet wet. At least three are again built squarely on the same identikit badass bass riff; most noteworthy, *Speedfreak* (done countless times better and before in *White Line Fever*, *Motörhead* et al), but only because the others are so dire.

Panned by the same critics who'd been singing their praises for the past two years, the *Iron Fist* tour was nevertheless another sell-out – 24 shows including three nights at Newcastle's City Hall, three nights in Birmingham and the four Hammersmith Odeon shows.

But the feeling backstage was no longer one of outlandish fun and overindulgence. I joined the tour for the Newcastle and London shows and the overindulgence was still much in evidence, but the fun, the filthy banter, the brotherly bullshit was notably thin on the ground.

"Lemmy was such a great frontman," sighed Clarke. "One of my fondest memories is of

GETTY x2

If looks could kill: (l-r) Phil 'Philthy Animal' Taylor, Lemmy, 'Fast' Eddie Clarke.

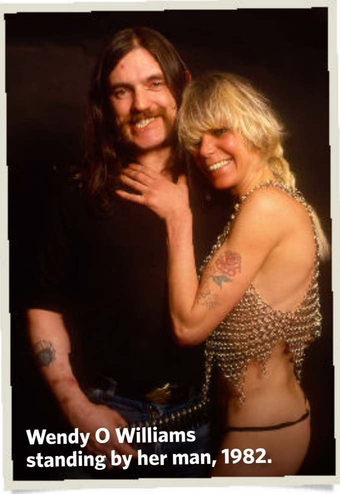
Lemmy sweating his fucking bollocks off in that black silk shirt he used to wear. I get memories of that and it makes me choke. I fill up, cos we were at the height of our fame, and we were tanking."

> **"We all took far too many drugs. Lemmy took more speed than any human being I've ever seen."**
>
> **Mick Farren**

Lemmy was now a regular face in gossip columns, familiar in the same way as a Phil Lynott or a Ronnie Wood. When he turned up unexpectedly on *Top Of The Pops* with his new best friends the Nolan Sisters, as guest stars on the Young & Moody Band single *Don't Do That*, everyone grinned knowingly at Lemmy in his white waiter's jacket and mirrored sunglasses. Lemmy looking both dangerous and… cute.

The tabloid press had a field day. *The Sun* ran pictures of Lemmy cuddling 16-year-old Coleen Nolan. Word spread that Lemmy was doing his best to corrupt the youngest, prettiest Nolan – something she was happy to confirm years later: "When I was younger, Lemmy from Motörhead had a thing for my breasts. I turned him down, mainly because I knew I wouldn't be able to take him home to my mother! He was lovely though."

Phil Taylor affected not to give a shit about such shenanigans, while secretly wondering why he hadn't been invited to the party.



Wendy O Williams standing by her man, 1982.

MAIN: ALLAN BALLARD; INSET: RAY PALMER ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX

Clarke, though, quietly seethed. When Lemmy announced plans for Motörhead to collude with Plasmatics singer Wendy O Williams in a roughed-up version of the old Tammy Wynette chestnut *Stand By Your Man*, Clarke lost it.

The way Lemmy saw it, the *St. Valentine's Day Massacre* EP the band had done the year before with Girlschool – under the nom-de-plume Headgirl – had given Motörhead their biggest-selling hit. Maybe this would work out that way too.

Clarke was appalled. "I thought it was absolute shit! The idea had come up after Lemmy had been pictured in the music papers with Wendy at the Marquee. Everybody went: 'Wow, yes!' Except me."

Downer. Typical Clarke. Always moaning. He'll stop in a minute. Only he didn't.

The argument was still going on after they'd flown to Toronto for the start of their North American tour in May 1982.

Lemmy saw it like this: "I didn't want to be thought of as heavy metal. To me, Motörhead have more in common with punk."

But Clarke hated the idea. Lemmy hated Clarke for hating the idea. In the end they agreed to compromise – and do the track with Wendy. Clarke didn't last the first session.

"The trouble is," he told me years later, "you get to a certain level of fame and it starts to affect the way you're thinking. The nice thing about not having a pot to piss in, you don't think. You just get on and do it. I said I'll have to leave the band, then. They said okay."

There is an extended epilogue to this story, of course. One that would follow Lemmy and 'Fast' Eddie Clarke and Phil 'Philthy Animal' Taylor to the grave. But *Iron Fist* marked the end of Motörhead's golden age. It had lasted just three years. Motörhead – three syllables: Mo-tör-head. Three Amigos: Lem, Phil and Ed. Three of the greatest rock albums ever made. *Iron Fist* just isn't one of them.

The special 40th anniversary editions of Iron Fist are out now via Sanctuary.

TERRY O'NEILL / © ICONIC IMAGES LIMITED

HIS BARK MATERIALS

Diamond Dogs was the point at which an unsettled **David Bowie** was shedding his glam-rock skin and shaping up to become the 'plastic soul' man of his next album. It was also, he said, "my most difficult album".

Words: **David Sinclair** Photos: **Terry O'Neill**

Released in the summer of 1974, *Diamond Dogs* found David Bowie navigating the dog days of the glam-rock era – a hot and sultry period before the cultural weather broke. Having surfed and defined the pop zeitgeist about as well as any individual star since Elvis Presley, he was now cresting the last stretch of a wave as it came crashing into shore.

Diamond Dogs was a resounding commercial success – No.1 in the UK, No.5 in the US. But the album was marked down at the time. "A rather grandiose mood piece… It's okay, you know, but is it really necessary?" was the *NME*'s verdict. And, retrospectively, it tends to get brushed aside in the grand sweep of things as a transitional album, marking the point in Bowie's artistic timeline at which he was shedding his glam-rock skin and stepping into his role as the 'plastic soul' man of his next studio album *Young Americans*. (*NME* later revised its opinion and, in 2013, rated *Diamond Dogs* one of "The 500 Greatest Albums of all Time" – albeit ranked at No.447, a long way behind many of his other albums.)

Bowie himself was quick to recognise the record's limitations. "It was not a concept album," he told Robert Hilburn in September 1974. "It was a collection of things. And I didn't have a band. So that's where the tension came in. I couldn't believe I had finished it when I did. I had done so much of it myself. I never want to be in that position again. It was frightening trying to make an album with no support behind you. I was very much on my own. It was my most difficult album. It was a relief that it did so well."

Whatever the sense of "tension", both musically and personally, which overshadowed the making of *Diamond Dogs*, the album is nevertheless a remarkably pure distillation of Bowie's genius. Indeed, if you are looking for a collection of recordings that stands as a monument to Bowie's across-the-board prowess as a songwriter, singer, guitarist, saxophonist, keyboard player, producer and all-round media maven, there is no other album in his entire catalogue that compares to *Diamond Dogs*. Transitional or not, it remains as true an expression of his artistry on every front as anything he ever released.

"It was frightening trying to make an album with no support behind you. I was on my own."

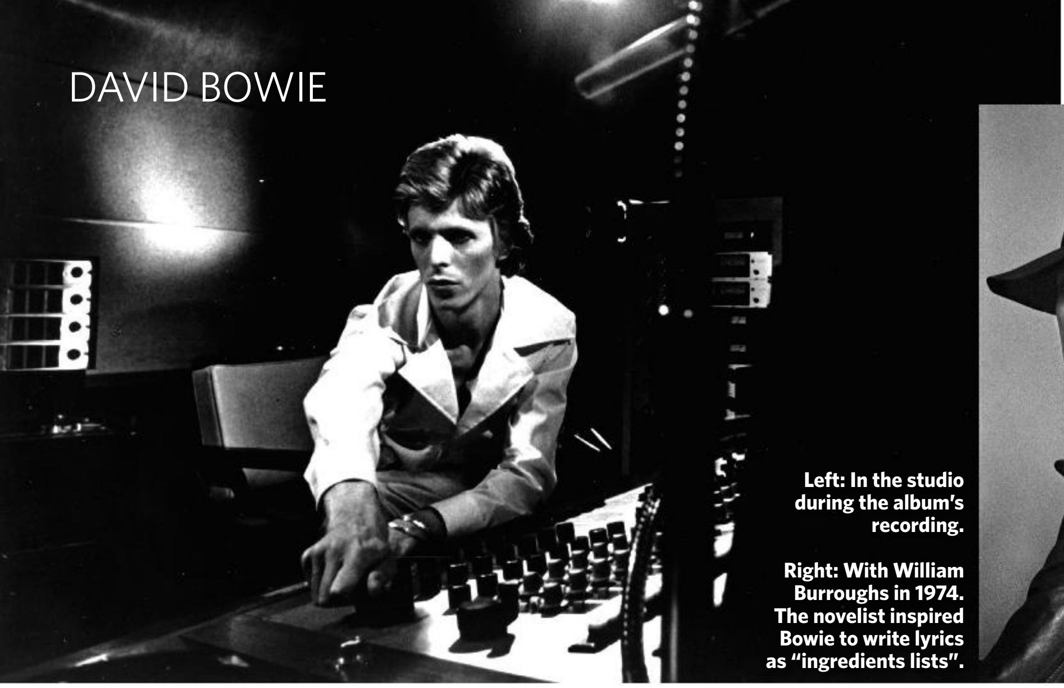
David Bowie

The album was recorded in London, mostly at Olympic Studios, and Hilversum in the Netherlands, between December 1973 and February 1974. Having famously disbanded the Spiders From Mars live on stage at Hammersmith Odeon the previous July, Bowie's first challenge was to fill the guitar genius-shaped hole left in his musical life by the departure of Mick Ronson. In a defiant display of ambition and bravado, Bowie resolved to do the job himself. "I knew that the guitar playing had to be more than okay," he said, looking back in 1997. "That couple of months I spent putting [*Diamond Dogs*] together before I went into the studio was probably the only time in my life where I really buckled down to learn the stuff I needed to have on the album. I'd actually practise two hours a day."

Having also dispensed with the services of longstanding producer Ken Scott, Bowie's initial plan was not only to produce the album but also to play every instrument himself – perhaps reaching the point at which ambition gave way to hubris. Wiser counsel prevailed and he found a new rhythm section comprising session bass player Herbie Flowers (the man responsible for the swooping bass line on Lou Reed's *Walk On The Wild Side*) and drummer Tony Newman (best known for his stint in the Jeff Beck Group). Pianist Mike Garson and drummer Aynsley Dunbar, who had both contributed to *Pin Ups*, the album of cover versions which Bowie had somehow slotted into his schedule and released in October 1973, were also brought in.

All sorts of grand ideas were floated in the build up to *Diamond Dogs*. Bowie had spoken of his intention to mount a "full-scale rock musical" re-telling the story of Ziggy Stardust. He'd also let it be known that he was planning to write and direct a musical production for TV of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, one of his favourite novels.

"I'd failed to obtain the theatrical rights from George Orwell's widow," Bowie told the *Mail On Sunday* in 2008. "And having written three or more songs for it already, I did a fast about-face and recobbled the idea into *Diamond Dogs*: teen punks on rusty skates living on the roofs of the dystopian Hunger City; a post-apocalyptic landscape." ▷



Left: In the studio during the album's recording.

Right: With William Burroughs in 1974. The novelist inspired Bowie to write lyrics as "ingredients lists".

BOWIE & WILLIAM BURROUGHS: TERRY O'NEILL/ © ICONIC IMAGES LIMITED

The scene is set on the opening number, *Future Legend*, a brief, howling, growling, synthesised soundtrack with a voiceover from Bowie introducing us to a ghastly, ruined cityscape where *'Fleas the size of rats sucked on rats the size of cats/ And ten thousand peoploids split into small tribes…'* The recitation ends with the jarring proclamation: *'This ain't rock and roll. This is genocide!'*

The title track, which follows, actually sounds a lot more like rock'n'roll than mass murder – with an influence that owed a noticeable debt to Mick Jagger and Keith Richards. As chance would have it, the Rolling Stones were in Olympic Studios recording their album *It's Only Rock'n'Roll* at the same time as Bowie was working on *Diamond Dogs*. Olympic's in-house engineer, Keith Harwood, who engineered *Diamond Dogs*, had previously worked on several Stones albums. And if the general fraternising that went on during the course of the sessions wasn't enough to reinforce the connection, Bowie and his then-wife Angie (Angela Barnett) had recently moved into a grand terraced house in Chelsea where they were now near neighbours of Mick and Bianca Jagger, with whom they socialised.

Indeed, according to the American singer and model Ava Cherry, who stayed in the house for a time with David and Angie, there was a lot more than socialising going on. "Mick Jagger knew David, and I was friends with both of them," Cherry told Bowie biographer Dylan Jones. "So all three of us used to hang out a lot, and yes we did have some fun together." According to Cherry, at the end of one party in New York, everyone had left apart from her, Bowie and Jagger. "So it just ended up with the three of us sleeping together. That was it. And we had a wonderful time and we had a lot of fun."

> **"*Diamond Dogs* was a weird period because everything that David had done up to that point suddenly exploded."**
>
> **Earl Slick**

Diamond Dogs performed disappointingly when released as a single in June 1974 (after the album was released) in the UK, where it peaked at No.21. Far more resonant and enduring as a flagship track for the album was *Rebel Rebel* – the song that most clearly marked both the end of an era for Bowie and the jumping off point for *Diamond Dogs*.

Recorded on December 27, 1973, *Rebel Rebel* was the first song of the sessions and the last song that Bowie recorded at Trident Studios in Soho where he had recorded the majority of his work since 1968. Released as a single in the UK in February 1974, ahead of the album, *Rebel Rebel* reached No.5 and remains one of Bowie's touchstone songs. The lyric is as pertinent today – maybe even more so – as it was almost 50 years ago: *'You've got your mother in a whirl, cos she's not sure if you're a boy or a girl.'* And the riff is a masterpiece: simple, original and instantly recognisable in the way that only a handful of pop-rock riffs – *Sweet Jane, Jumping Jack Flash, You Really Got Me* – could ever truly claim to be. Did Bowie really come up with that and play it completely off his own bat?

"He had the riff about seventy-five per cent sorted out," recalled Alan Parker, a session guitarist credited for his contribution to one track (*1984*) on the album. "He wanted it a bit like a Stones riff and he played it to me as such, and I then tinkered around with it. I said: 'Well, what if we did this and that and made it sound more clangy and put some bends in it?' And he said: 'Yeah, I love that, that's fine.'" Whatever Parker's contribution to the sculpting and performing of the song behind the scenes, Bowie is the sole writer and guitarist listed on the credits.

While *Rebel Rebel* and the title track echoed the triumphs of Bowie's glam-rock past, the rest of the album offered a tantalising glimpse of the future-Bowie that was yet to fully materialise. At the heart of Side 1 is the three-piece song suite *Sweet Thing/Candidate/Sweet Thing (Reprise)*, which was originally intended to be the centrepiece for the would-be stage production of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. It is a yearning yet chilling sequence, with lyrics rendered as a collage of bittersweet images and ideas. *'I guess we could cruise down one more time, with you by my side it should be fine/We'll buy some drugs and watch a band, then jump in the river holding hands.'*

The sequence is notable for its intensely detailed arrangement – brought to life not least by Bowie's contributions on saxophone and guitar. The end of the *Reprise* section (which runs into *Rebel Rebel*) has him conjuring a screeching, crunching, overdriven guitar noise that prefigured the industrial sounds that Earl Slick would later develop on *Station To Station* and Reeves Gabrels would take to another level on the Tin Machine albums.

Bowie wrote the lyrics for these and other songs on *Diamond Dogs* using the 'cut-up' method popularised by the 'beat' writer and literary figurehead William Burroughs. "You write down a paragraph or two describing several different subjects," Bowie explained. "Creating a kind of story ingredients list, I suppose. And then cut the sentences into four- or five-word sections; mix 'em up and reconnect them. You can get some pretty interesting idea combinations like this."

While the mood and subject matter of the songs on Side 2 is clearly derived from the nightmarish gloom of Orwell's novel, it is impossible to know where and how these cut-ups might have been made or what the precise meaning is. *'We're today's scrambled creatures, locked in tomorrow's double feature, heaven's on the pillow, its silence competes with hell/It's a twenty-four-hour service guaranteed to make you tell…'* Bowie sings mournfully on *We Are The Dead*. It certainly sounds like a bad trip.

The comparatively jaunty music on tracks such as *Rock'n'Roll With Me* and *Big Brother* sounds like it should be part of a stage musical – as indeed it was originally intended to be. *The Rocky Horror Show*, which opened at the Royal Court Theatre in London in 1973, was on the way to becoming a cult phenomenon at the time Bowie was writing the album and there was a lot of musical theatricality in the air. There was also evidence of the looming switch of musical pace and persona that Bowie would effect on his next album, *Young Americans* – most obviously represented in the ▷

BOWIE IN STUDIO: GETTY

The *Diamond Dogs* album was Bowie letting himself off the leash, up to a point.

TERRY O'NEILL / © ICONIC IMAGES LIMITED

Backstage in Los Angeles on the "headache" of the Diamond Dogs tour.

TERRY O'NEILL / © ICONIC IMAGES LIMITED

track *1984*, which took its inspiration from the wah-wah guitar and string arrangements of Isaac Hayes's soundtrack to the 1971 film *Shaft*.

"When we worked on the song *1984* he was already referencing Barry White," said Ken Scott, who had produced an earlier recording of the song as part of the *Aladdin Sane* sessions in January 1973. "He wanted the hi-hat and the strings to sound like they would be on a Barry White album. He was already anticipating the sound of *Young Americans*."

The faintly shocking, sci-fi cover artwork by the Belgian artist Guy Peellaert, featuring a picture of Bowie with his lower body transformed into that of a dog complete with genitalia (airbrushed from most versions at the time) became instantly iconic. Bowie got the idea after Mick Jagger told him that Peellaert was designing the sleeve of the forthcoming Stones album *It's Only Rock'n'Roll*. "I immediately rushed out and got Guy Peellaert to do my cover too," Bowie admitted later. When *It's Only Rock'n'Roll* was released several months after *Diamond Dogs*, everyone assumed the Stones had copied Bowie. "He [Jagger] never forgave me for that!" Bowie said.

The spectacular and technically ambitious tour to promote *Diamond Dogs* set new standards for theatrical invention and sheer scale of endeavour.

According to the Bowie chronicler Nicholas Pegg the stage set "was more elaborate than any previously attempted for a rock tour and cost an unprecedented $250,000… A giant backdrop depicted the nightmarish Hunger City skyline, tilted in jagged perspective. To either side stood two massive aluminium skyscrapers, linked by a moving bridge which would rise and fall during the show. The specialist props, run by hydraulic mechanisms and early forms of computer control, were to be built from scratch."

The early reviews were delirious. The reviewer from *Melody Maker* described it as "a combination of contemporary music and theatre that is several years ahead of its time… a completely new concept in rock theatre – the most original spectacle in rock I have ever seen."

According to Bowie: "It was truly the first real rock and roll theatrical show that made any sense." But he nevertheless remembered the tour as "quite an unbelievable headache".

At times, the sheer ambition of the staging threatened to outstrip the technical knowhow. With cranes and cherry-pickers and bits of staging flying around, there was little margin for error.

"*Diamond Dogs* scared me because I was mutating into something I just didn't believe in any more."

David Bowie

According to stage manager Nick Russiyan, "David was in great danger physically and could have gotten electrocuted or killed."

There was a disconnect too between the sophisticated musicianship of the new stage band – featuring guitarists Carlos Alomar and Earl Slick – and the rough edges of the original *Diamond Dogs* recording, played by Bowie himself. "That album had a quality of obsession with what I wanted to get over," Bowie later reflected. "They played it too well and with too much fluidity. So to me *Diamond Dogs* was never played well on stage, or at least never with the sensibility that the album had."

Despite the positive reaction, the production was scaled back dramatically after the first leg and morphed into the so-called Soul Tour, with a set-list featuring material from Bowie's forthcoming album *Young Americans* (released in 1975).

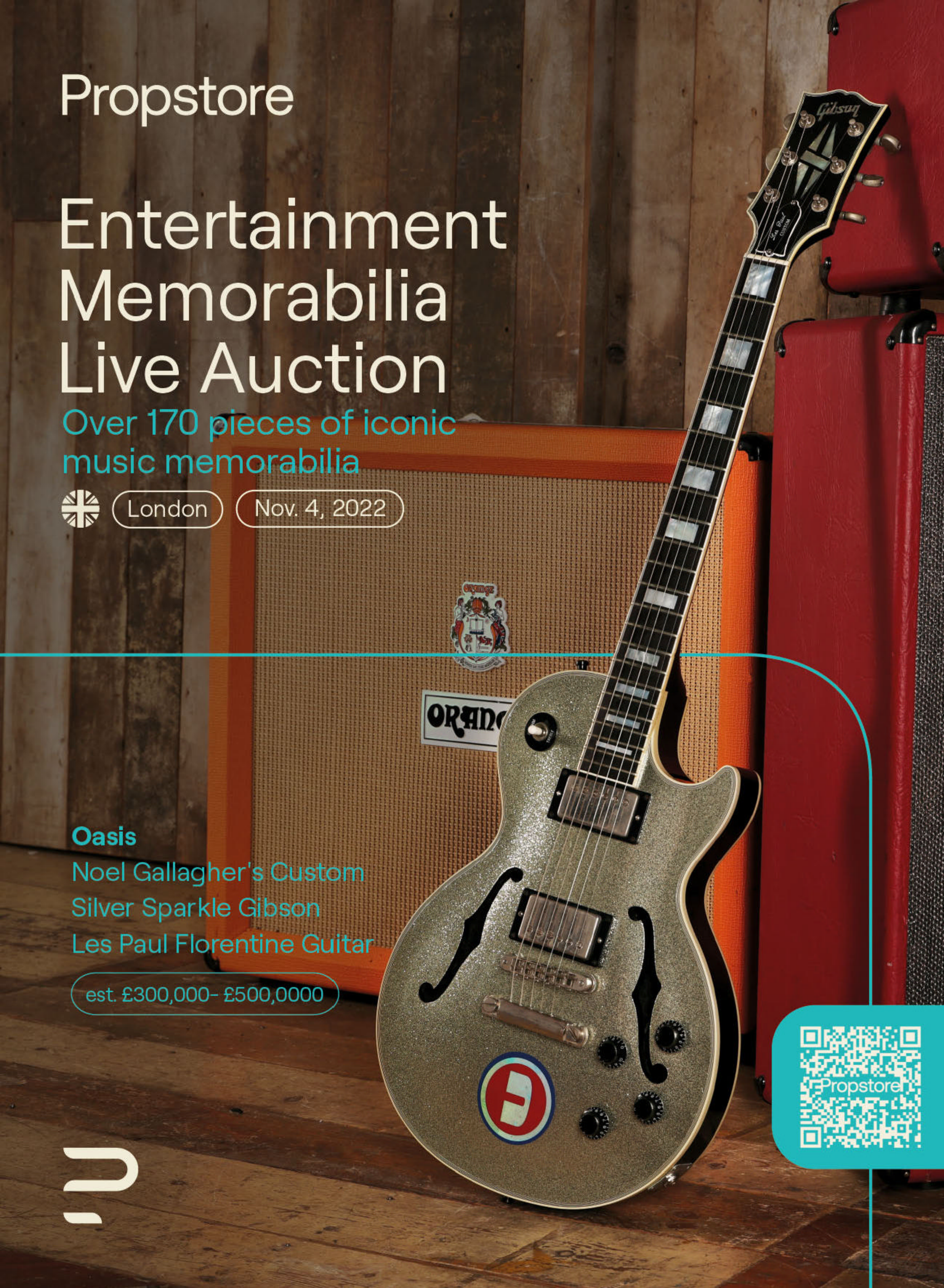
"I threw the set away and came back with a completely different show," Bowie later recalled. "They were supposed to be selling the entire show on this spectacular set, and the kids would come and there was no set, no nothing, and there I was singing soul music."

"*Diamond Dogs* was a weird period because everything that David had done up to that point suddenly exploded," said guitarist Earl Slick. "It was like a nuclear explosion… Bowiemania… Then he decided to just abandon the whole thing. *Diamond Dogs* is probably one of the most iconic things he did in his entire career but… it [the tour] didn't even make the West Coast."

"It was pretty obvious that David was taking coke," recalled Jayne County, the American proto-punk glam-rocker who was signed to Bowie's management firm MainMan at that time. "He became very skeletal in his appearance and began rattling off speeches that sounded meaningless to the rest of us… He began to get paranoid… accusing people of ripping him off and stealing his drugs."

"*Diamond Dogs* scared me because I was mutating into something I just didn't believe in any more, and the dreadful thing was, it was so easy," Bowie said, looking back in 2008. "The *Diamond Dogs* period was just an extension of *Aladdin Sane*, which in itself was just an extrapolation of *Ziggy Stardust*.

"But by the time of *Diamond Dogs* that persona had started to feel claustrophobic, and I needed a change… *Diamond Dogs* was making me sick, both physically and creatively, and I was shifting into melodrama."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Oasis
Noel Gallagher's Custom Silver Sparkle Gibson Les Paul Florentine Guitar
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SAINTS & SINNERS

How the maverick Britrocker survived another messy divorce to shack up with his "bit on the side": **Ginger Wildheart & The Sinners**.

Words: **Johnny Sharp**

Whatever you might say about Ginger Wildheart, he's not one to dwell too long on past glories. Less than six months since the band with whom he is eternally associated parted company once more, he is now preparing to tour with a new band with a new Southern rock, boogie and country-influenced style, with a debut album about to drop and a follow-up nearly complete. Yet it turns out, on closer investigation, that Ginger Wildheart & The Sinners is the result not of a sudden step into new territory, but a long-planned project that he finally has time to devote his full attention to.

The Sinners formed out of Ginger's desire for a new project back in the hazy pre-pandemic days of 2019 when, despite the vibrant vitality emitting from the music he was making with The Wildhearts, it was far from a happy camp.

SHIRLAINE FORREST/PRESS

> **"[The last Wildhearts album] wasn't a band record. But this one very much is."**
>
> **Ginger Wildheart**

"We weren't getting on," Ginger tells *Classic Rock* over a Zoom link from his kitchen. "We didn't hang out. And I wanted a bunch of players that, you know, *liked* each other. This was going to be a happy place outside of the mayhem.

"The Wildhearts was the big breadwinner, but I kept thinking, 'Aw, that hat's getting a bit tight, let me put the nice comfy one on for a while.'"

He found that sanctuary not among old muckers but from new acquaintances whose music proved the initial draw. That said, he was keen to make sure that they would click personality-wise, too…

"I started asking around – d'you know any good bands? Not metal bands, just rock'n'roll bands – country bands even. My friend gave me a Stone Mountain Sinners CD. And I was blown away."

The Worcester-based purveyors of "Americana and heartland rock", led by singer and guitar-maker Neil Ivison and co-songwriter Nick Lyndon, were up for collaborating, but Ginger had something else in mind first: a pint or two.

"I met them at a studio in the middle of darkest Wales. We had the place for a week, potentially, and they were keen to get started. But I was like, 'Let's go to the pub!' Because after working with The Wildhearts it was like, 'There is no fun if you don't get on.' So off we went, no one turned into a lager monster, we all had a laugh, woke up the next day with hangovers and plugged in.

"And that's what you hear – it was pretty much recorded live. That's another thing that was never the case with The Wildhearts. The last album was all recorded remotely. People say, 'That last album was great,' but I barely remember it. I wrote it, demoed it and people did their parts at home. It wasn't a band record. But this one very much is."

Ginger, Ivison and Lyndon were joined by Tri-City Fanfare and Man drummer Shane Dixon, along with guest vocals from Givvy Flynn.

The music, meanwhile, ploughed a notably less intense, punk-fuelled furrow than The Wildhearts, channelling the feel of bands such as the Allman Brothers, Georgia Satellites and Status Quo.

The latter two acts' back catalogue was raided for a couple of covers, in the shape of *Six Years Gone* and *Dirty Water*. But it's testament to the new band's songwriting that the original compositions stand out most on their self-titled debut album.

Lately, Always is a sweetly sun-dappled roots-rock lament, *Work In Progress* is a choogling, Creedence-y joy, *Breakout* is a lilting trad-folk anthem and new single *Footprints In The Sand* is expertly turned heartland rock benefitting from Ginger stepping back to let Ivison take the mic.

As excited as Ginger clearly is about this new project, though, he admits that it took longer than he hoped to find the time to promote the record and do it justice – hence its release two years after recording. Much of that delay was of course due to his duties with The Wildhearts… until in March they abruptly announced a "hiatus" with all upcoming dates cancelled, due to "personal issues within the band".

"It was just at the point where I couldn't stand it another day," says Ginger. "Even the money I was making – I'd rather be broke than be miserable.

"There was a lot going on… I know there's rumours it was all one person but it wasn't, it was like a divorce, there's not just one element. You try and work through it but if your partner's not willing to work with you… I did me best, but ultimately it was time to divorce the wife and move in with the bit on the side."

You sense that the thrill of this new relationship is also having a positive effect on Ginger's mental health, and the struggles with debilitating depression that he's openly documented on social media in recent years. "It can happen at any time," he says of the attacks from the proverbial black dog. "It happened on stage the other day, and I was lucky to be on stage with a couple of people that were really supportive and you know, slowly we got through it. Whereas I had a meltdown before that with The Wildhearts, and they were all pissed off with me.

"I'm like, 'This is not personal. If after 30 years you still don't believe that this is legit, then who the fuck are you? And why am I hanging out here?' I guess some people think that, you know, supporting someone through mental health is weak for some reason. But no one knows the right thing to say or do. So just be there, be present, be supportive. People who belittle your struggle – in the nicest possible way, just fuck them off."

By the time he did part company with the band he'd made his name with, though, he did so in the knowledge that he had a highly promising new project to pour his energies into. Just how promising we will surely understand when The Sinners tour this month (October) to promote their debut album, a follow-up to which is also well on the way to completion.

It may not be Ginger at his wildest, but he's following his heart in a way that any fan of his songwriting will relate to.

Ginger Wildheart & The Sinners is released on October 7 via Wicked Cool Records.

TIMING IS EVERYTHING

Fronted by vocal powerhouse Joyce Kennedy, **Mother's Finest** were simply too ahead of the game: black musicians playing rock. If they'd arrived a decade later they could have been huge.

Words: **Paul Elliott**

Lemmy named his band Bastard before he decided on Motörhead. Lars Ulrich thought Thunderfuck was the way to go, before taking the name of his friend's fanzine titled *Metallica*. And as Joyce 'Baby Jean' Kennedy recalls, the greatest of all funk rock bands once considered calling themselves The Motherfuckers.

"We wanted to say that," she says, laughing, "but we couldn't have gotten away with it. So we just took the 'MF' and became Mother's Finest."

With a multi-racial line-up and a sound described as 'Sly And The Family Stone-meets-Led Zeppelin' – a combustible mix of soul power and hard-rock muscle – Mother's Finest emerged in the early 70s as a band on a mission. As Kennedy puts it: "We wanted to make music that anybody could enjoy. We wanted to entertain and to be provocative, to give people food for thought. It was soulful, spiritual rock'n'roll, sexy and heavy with guitar. We were encompassing all of those things."

There were multi-racial groups and black rock stars before them – Sly And The Family Stone and Jimi Hendrix being the most significant. But "our band was predominately black", Kennedy says. In the definitive Mother's Finest line-up, fronted by Kennedy and her husband Glenn 'Doc' Murdock, and featuring Jerry 'Wyzard' Seay on bass and Mike Keck on keyboards, the white members were drummer Barry 'B.B. Queen' Borden and guitarist Gary Moore, whose nickname 'Moses Mo', would distinguish him from the Irish guitar hero.

It was with this line-up that the band made their reputation as a fearsome live act, and reached a creative peak between '76 and '77 with two albums produced by Tom Werman, who was then working with Ted Nugent and Cheap Trick, and would later make hit records for Mötley Crüe, Twisted Sister, Poison and others. But for Mother's Finest the big breakthrough never came. Which, Kennedy says, was a mystery to Werman. "Tom always wondered why this was one band he produced where it never happened on a huge level." She says that from the band's perspective, with a mixture of pride and fatalism: "We had all the things that would make it work, but for some reason the spheres didn't see it that way."

As she looks back on the glory days of a band she still leads, alongside Doc and Moses Mo – a band whose influence has carried over the decades in the music of Prince, Living Colour, Red Hot Chili Peppers, Lenny Kravitz, Dan Reed Network and more – she accepts that what made Mother's Finest unique was also what made them a hard sell in what was a less enlightened era.

"The band was multi-racial, and that was rare," she says. "Especially doing rock music with two people of colour out front. It was a beautiful thing. But back then nobody really knew how to make it work within the bureaucracy of the music industry. I just think that this band was a little bit before its time."

"The band was multi-racial, and that was rare, especially doing rock music."

Joyce Kennedy

The story of Mother's Finest begins with two young people falling in love in 1965. Joyce Kennedy, born in the small town of Anguilla, Mississippi, had lived in Chicago since the age of seven. In her early teens she started out as a jazz singer, modelling herself on what she calls "big-voiced women" such as Aretha Franklin and Sarah Vaughan. Motown and other soul music also had a big influence on her. "I liked strong singers like James Brown," she says. "All those sweet, gentle, feminine voices, that was never my thing."

In 1963, aged 16, she released her first single, *I Still Love You*, which became a regional hit. Two years later she was performing in a Chicago club when she met local boy Glenn Murdock. "He was singing with a group like The Temptations," she recalls. "I was eighteen years old with a hundred years of soul. It was one of those kismet things. We were attracted to each other right away, and we've been together ever since."

By the time the 1960s were ending, with the rock era and the counterculture in full swing,

Joyce 'Baby Jean' Kennedy with Mother's Finest (and inset) at Alex Cooley's Electric Ballroom in Atlanta, Georgia in 1976.

they realised they needed to move with the times. They were working as singers for jazz star Woody Herman, and as Kennedy explains: "Doc and I were eager to change the course of what we were doing. He was in tuxedos and I was in long gowns. It was time to change and get into bell bottoms and that whole 'peace and love' attitude."

During a tour with Herman, they discovered a kindred spirit in the man they would come to know as Moses Mo.

"We saw this blues band playing in a club in Dayton, Ohio," Kennedy remembers. "And here was this long-haired cute little white boy on guitar. We hit it off, and when we were heading to Miami for another gig, Mo said: 'Take me with you!'"

The three of them ended up stranded in Miami when the tour was cut short, but Kennedy says "this turned out to be a blessing". A friend gave them a place to stay in the city, where they remained for the best part of a year. It was there that they hooked up with bassist Wyzard and the first of several drummers who came into their orbit, Doug Thompson.

By early 1970, Mother's Finest were in business. "That was when the rocking started," Kennedy says. "We just lit into it. Everybody we loved, we tried to grab a little bit from, whether it was the Rolling Stones, the Four Tops, Joe Cocker or Led Zeppelin. And it was because we were a cover band in the beginning that we derived our sound. Rock bands usually relied mostly on guitar and drums, but for us the bass was another power point. Doc and Wyzard and I had a natural three-part gospel kind of harmony that most bands did not have. So that became our signature. And we had a real smart guitar player. Mo loved funk bands like the Ohio Players, so even as we were evolving to a heavier rock sound, he was always in the pocket. He could do a lead guitar within the groove, and that made it funky."

"We were paving the way for things to happen in music, but we didn't know it."

Joyce Kennedy

On a musical level, something special was happening. And on a personal level, Kennedy had no issue with being the only girl in a boys' club. "I was just as much a bad girl as they were bad boys," she laughs. "And of course they were bad boys. It was the seventies!"

With spirits riding high, the failure of the band's debut album came as a rude awakening. Titled simply *Mother's Finest*, and released on RCA Records in 1972, it was over-produced, with strings and horns added to several tracks without the band's consent. The album bombed. And although a follow-up was recorded, it was buried when RCA dropped the band. It was a bitter pill to swallow.

Having relocated to a new environment – Atlanta, Georgia – Mother's Finest dug in, building a big following on the club circuit. And one night in 1975, their luck changed. Tom Werman, staff producer for Epic Records, was in Atlanta working on Ted Nugent's debut album, and when he saw Mother's Finest play live, he was instantly converted. "He became a champion for us," says Kennedy.

The band signed to Epic, and their Werman-produced second album, also titled *Mother's Finest*, released in '76, was an emphatic, definitive statement. In heavy, funky songs such as *Fire* and *My Baby*, Kennedy belted it out like Chaka Khan and Tina Turner, while Doc Murdock delivered a defiant message in what inevitably became a controversial number: *Niggizz Can't Sang Rock & Roll*. "Doc is a Chicago brother. He knows that world better than anybody," Kennedy explains. "And what he was saying with that song was the truth. He's courageous like that. The whole idea was: blacks don't do rock'n'roll any more, even though they started it, so we're gonna do it – right here, in your face! We had a lot of people coming after us, because it was too early to say that word on record. But now you hear it every five minutes. Timing is everything."

In 1977, with their next album, *Another Mother Further*, they continued to kick ass and push buttons. Doc flipped the bird to racial stereotyping in what would become one of the band's best-known songs, *Piece Of The Rock: 'Now go on and play your disco music/I got to rock'n'roll myself all night long…'*

In another song they turned the tables on Led Zeppelin. *Micky's Monkey* was essentially a cover of a 60s hit (originally titled with an 'e' in *Mickey*) by The Miracles. But the Mother's Finest version was beefed up by Moses Mo playing the riff from the Zeppelin track *Custard Pie*. "We put a soul lyric and melody on top of a rock classic," Kennedy says. As for the provenance of said rock classic, which Zeppelin based on the song *Drop Down Mama* by American bluesman 'Sleepy' John Estes, she comments dryly: "People don't always study history. But really, does that matter?"

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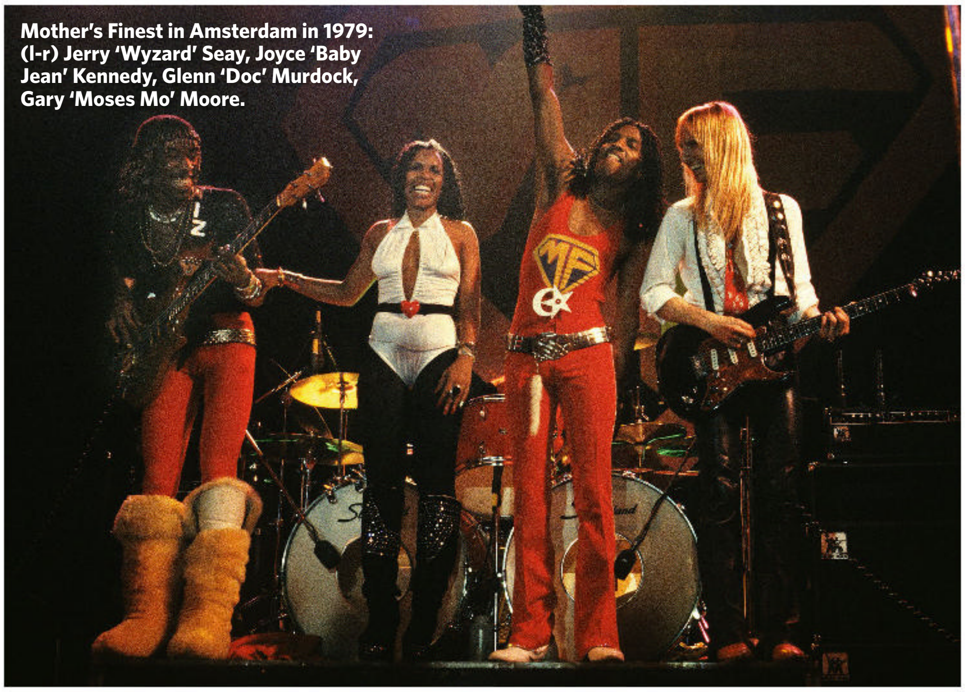


Mother's Finest in Amsterdam in 1979: (l-r) Jerry 'Wyzard' Seay, Joyce 'Baby Jean' Kennedy, Glenn 'Doc' Murdock, Gary 'Moses Mo' Moore.

"I was just as much a bad girl as they were bad boys. And of course they were bad boys. It was the seventies!"

Joyce Kennedy

During this period, Mother's Finest performed in arenas as the opening act for funk titans Parliament and The Commodores, and some of the biggest rock acts of the time, including The Who, Aerosmith and Boston. "We hardly ever walked away without an audience going crazy about the band," Kennedy says.

There was one exception: when they opened for Black Sabbath at the Philadelphia Spectrum in '76.

"The stage was in darkness when we started," she recalls. "We were killing it until the lights came on. But when that audience saw the band, it was all over. They flat-lined on us. They were totally not gonna to give us anything of their soul. Nothing. That was the only time that ever happened to us."

She also recalls a similar reaction from a DJ at a rock radio station in New York City: "There was no picture of the band on the cover of *Another Mother Further*, and this DJ was playing the crap out of it. But then he saw a photo, he saw people of colour, and he pulled the record off the radio right there."

There was stronger support for Mother's Finest in Atlanta and around the southern states. "They played us on rock radio and black radio." But that one hit record they needed never came, and eventually momentum was lost.

Under pressure from Epic to make an album with a stronger R&B focus, the band dialled down the rock'n'roll on 1978's *Mother Factor*. The album hung around the pop charts for 20 weeks, but no hit single materialised. And although the band gained a cult following from touring in Europe, their dream of breaking big in America was gone.

In 1981 they returned to their classic sound with *Iron Age*, the heaviest album of their career. But after two more years and one more album, Mother's Finest broke up – ironically, just as Michael Jackson was reaching a rock audience with the Eddie Van Halen-assisted *Beat It*, and Prince was about to drop his mega-hit *Purple Rain*.

As Kennedy reiterates: "Timing really is everything."

Four decades on, after a number of short-lived reunions, various personnel changes and another five studio albums (the most recent of which, *Goody 2 Shoes & The Filthy Beasts*, was released in 2015), Mother's Finest recently competed a nine-week European tour, with Kennedy and Doc leading a six-piece line-up powered by Moses Mo. "All the shows were sold out," she says proudly. "We're older, but we're still out there kicking our legs up – literally!"

Kennedy recently released her solo EP *Rock'n My Soul*, but says there are no plans for another Mother's Finest album. But then her voice rises. "I'm excited about the future, and I would love to play in the UK again sometime."

Whatever the future brings, Joyce Kennedy is sure of what she and her band achieved. "We were trailblazers without knowing that we were," she says. "That's it right there. We were paving the way for things to happen in music, but we didn't know it. Looking back now, we were necessary. Nobody said we were gonna reach the level of the Rolling Stones or Aerosmith, but we did our thing and we gained our recognition in God's own way."

Joyce Kennedy's EP Rock'n My Soul is out now via all streaming platforms.

GETTY x2

MOTHER'S PRIDE

Six tasty slices from the MF loaf.

FIRE

The opening track of the definitive MF album established a signature sound, with guitarist Moses Mo cranking out a riff that Ted Nugent would have sold his loincloth for, and Joyce Kennedy's voice burning with soul and sexuality.

NIGGIZZ CAN'T SANG ROCK & ROLL

If ever a song said 'fuck you', it was this one. The music was as heavy as the irony, the message controversial to some and misunderstood by others. As bassist Jerry 'Wyzard' Seay recalled: "Some people thought it was a white band singing it!"

MY BABY

Wyzard put it most succinctly when he said of this track: "This is total MF funk." A key track from the band's second self-titled album, it boasts a guitar riff that's as ballsy as anything on the first Montrose record.

MICKY'S MONKEY

In the days before mash-ups were a thing, MF fused a Motown dance-craze chant with the grinding riff from Led Zeppelin's *Custard Pie*. Seeing the Zep song had plundered an old blues number, it was fair game.

PIECE OF THE ROCK

MF always played deep in the pocket, and never more so than on *Piece Of The Rock*. A song that Mother's Finest have always played live, it's the very definition of funk rock.

MOVIN' ON

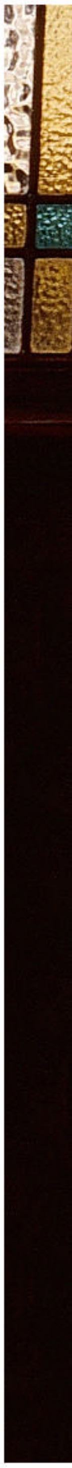
Mothers Finest's 1981 album *Iron Age* was aptly titled. It's seriously heavy stuff, as evidenced by opening track *Movin' On*, with the band at full power and Kennedy singing the shit out of it, as only she can.

Mother's Finest backstage at Die Kantine, Cologne, Germany, March 2015.

THE LAST STRAW

It's 35 years since **Marillion**'s final album with Fish was released, and it was a tumultuous journey for all involved. From the influence of alcohol, to incessant touring schedules and the final, bitter split, this is the inside story behind *Clutching At Straws*.

Words: **Dave Everley** Photos: **Steve Rothery**



RAY PALMER ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX

The Freilichtbühne Loreley is one of the world's great venues. Perched high on the Loreley, a 400-foot rock overlooking the Rhine Gorge in Western Germany, this open-air amphitheatre was originally built by the Nazis as a thingplatz – a showcase venue for the Third Reich to stage displays of propaganda thinly disguised as drama.

Other, older myths surround the Loreley. According to local folklore, it was once the home of a siren, who would draw passing ships on to the rocks more than 400 feet below. This macabre legend has been referenced in music by everyone from German composer Felix Mendelssohn to Wishbone Ash.

On July 18, 1987, Marillion arrived at the Loreley to play one of the biggest headlining shows of their career yet. It was two years since the release of *Misplaced Childhood*, the album that turned this unfashionable prog band into the unlikeliest pop stars of the decade.

But success had brought unforeseen issues. The demands of constant touring were taking their toll, and the gang mentality that originally fuelled them was fracturing. This turbulence was captured on the band's then most recent album, *Clutching At Straws*, a snapshot of a band struggling to keep their heads above water. In its central character, Torch, frontman Fish laid his own inner turmoil bare.

The 20,000 fans gathered at Loreley to see them might not have been aware, but Marillion were under a dark cloud. Behind the scenes, the band had split into two camps: Fish on one side, the rest on the other.

"Things were very miserable," says guitarist Steve Rothery. "If you watch the *Live From Loreley* video you can see the mood. The unity had gone. You can blame many things, you can point the finger at people who were hanging round and aggravating the problem, whispering in ears. But whatever the reason, it reached critical mass. There was something fundamentally wrong with how things were."

Their career wasn't dashed on the rocks at Loreley, but they were listing badly. Within 18 months the Fish era had come crashing to an acrimonious end, leaving the wreckage of broken friendships in its wake. At the heart of it all was *Clutching At Straws* – Marillion's dark masterpiece.

"*Clutching At Straws* is a brilliant album," says Fish. "I prefer it to *Misplaced Childhood*. It's very honest, very open, to the point where you go: 'Fucking hell…'"

"I feel less warm towards that album than I do *Misplaced Childhood*," says keyboard player Mark Kelly. "But I know some people really like it."

"It's a strange album," says Rothery. "It's a very powerful album in that it's got some of our best work. But you can also see the fracture lines."

The retrospective view of their fourth album is one of the few things the men who made it disagree on – remarkable, given the circumstances that surrounded it and the eventual outcome. On most other points, they're in surprising accordance, albeit with markedly different individual perspectives. Certainly, all five of them put the root of their problems down to the incessant touring schedule imposed on them by their manager, John Arnison.

"Just when you thought it was coming to an end there'd be another fucking series of gigs," says Fish. "We were squeezing the pips dry on *Misplaced*. It was like being at the circus; it's all fucking singing and dancing, but when you walk outside the tent it's scabby animals and shite. I was physically and mentally exhausted a lot of the time."

"I think Fish probably felt the pressure more than anyone else," says bassist Peter Trewavas. "If you're the person everybody wants to talk to, then the demands on your time are so great. Maybe we could have been a bit more understanding about that. But when things are happening it's like a fairground ride."

The singer admits that he was partying hard, partly as a release from the seemingly endless grind. His exploits were seized on with glee by the press, who liked their rock stars larger-than-life and, preferably, always ready with an open wallet.

"There were a lot of shadowy people around us and a lot of fucking drugs on offer, let's be open and honest about it," says Fish. "People go out on tour, they get tired and worn down, they need something to pep them up for the show. Then suddenly you've finished the show and you're still getting pepped up. You're in an eternal overdraft of energy."

It was this hedonistic lifestyle that prompted Fish to create the character who sat at the centre of *Clutching At Straws*. Torch was supposedly a writer suffering from writer's block, an older, more disillusioned version of the Jester from Marillion's earlier album. At 29, Torch was the same age as the man who conceived him. It didn't take a psychologist to work out that Torch, like the Jester and the kid from *Misplaced Childhood*, was essentially Fish himself.

"I created the Torch character as a kind of alter ego," he admits. "I think it was to disguise some of the excess in the lyrics that I was talking about. Because I felt guilty."

"We weren't getting on, and by the time we got to the tour it was intolerable."

Fish

The band needed a holiday, but the break that could have eased their situation and reset increasingly strained relationships never materialised. Instead, they were bundled back into the studio to record the follow-up to *Misplaced Childhood*. EMI wanted another hit album in short order.

"The touring really did take it out of us," says drummer Ian Mosley. "Then reality hit us when it came down to writing another album. You've got a blank canvas in front of you, and the record company is going: 'Is it ready yet?'"

The band began sketching out rough ideas for their fourth album at Steve Rothery's house in Wendover. Peter Trewavas remembers sketching out the beginnings of opening track *Hotel Hobbies* – "the soundscapey bit" he says – before the label paid for the band to move to a rehearsal studio between London and Brighton.

"They wanted to get us away from the clubs and bars and dark influences," says Fish. "Everybody went down there. We were going to be good little boys and concentrate on writing an album. And it was just awful. People were getting tetchy."

Marillion's traditional approach to songwriting involved building up segments of songs, which they would then find a way of piecing together like a jigsaw. Or, in Fish's words: "Trying to put them together with a hammer." ▷

The photo template for the cover of *Clutching At Straws*, and (right) Mark Wilkinson's initial artwork.

> **"It's a strange album, *Clutching*. It's got some of our best work, but you can also see the fracture lines."**
>
> **Steve Rothery**

"It was a bit like *Misplaced Childhood Part 2*," says Steve Rothery. "We were trying to stick all these tracks together that didn't really belong together. We had to step back a bit and re-evaluate what we were doing."

That much became clear when Chris Kimsey, who had produced *Misplaced Childhood* and would work on the new album, arrived with the band's A&R man, Hugh Stanley-Clarke, to hear what the band had written. The pair were unimpressed.

"They were, like: 'Is that all you've managed to come up with?'" says Fish. "Chris said: 'I don't hear any fucking singles in there.'"

There was one song that did stand out. It had emerged from one of the band's sporadic post-pub jam sessions, and was powered by a catchy Mark Kelly keyboard riff ("What we called 'The widdly-widdly synth stuff,'" he says). The song would eventually be titled *Incommunicado*. But, according to Fish, the rest of the band were dismissive of it.

"I always loved The Who, and I wanted to do more rocky stuff, but the band were not into the idea," he says. "And they were not into *Incommunicado*. But we played it to Chris Kimsey and he said: 'That's it – that's the single.' I was really chuffed. I felt like I got a backing for what I wanted to do."

This split in opinion over *Incommunicado* didn't augur well for Marillion's future. It wasn't the only point of difference, either. Rothery had brought in a song he'd been working on that the band thought had a lot of potential. Fish supplied a set of vivid lyrics inspired by observations he'd had while drinking one night in a pub near his parents' house in North Berwick. The song was titled *Warm Wet Circles*. But not everyone was impressed.

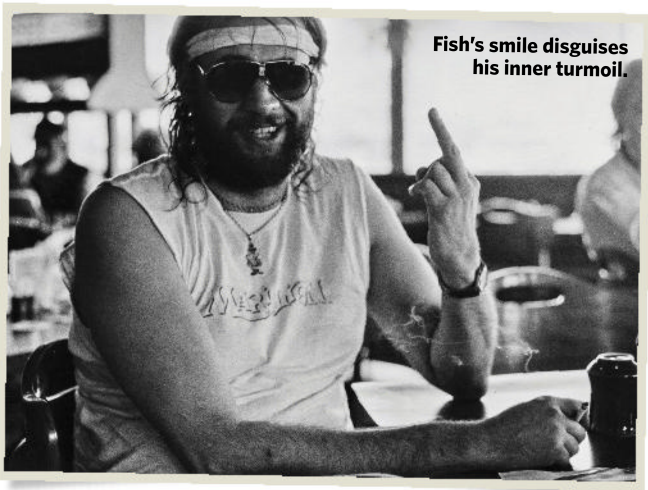
"I liked the music, but I hated that it was called *Warm Wet Circles*," says Kelly. "We weren't chasing hit singles, but if you want to kill a song stone dead, call it *Warm Wet Circles*. Fish's attitude was a bit like: 'Fuck you, I'm going to do what I want.'"

Musically, Marillion had largely jettisoned the more traditional prog elements of their sound. The ornate musicality of *Grendel* and *The Web* was a distant memory, replaced by a more mature approach that wouldn't upset the daytime radio listeners who had bought *Kayleigh* in their droves. But lyrically, *Clutching At Straws* disappeared down an altogether bleaker rabbit hole.

"It's a lot less optimistic an album," says Rothery. "Some of it symbolises Fish's disillusionment – he wanted success and he got success, but it didn't bring him the personal happiness that I think he expected it to."

"It's a 'drunken poet' album," says Fish. "That's why the cover featured Burns and Kerouac and Truman Capote. All those people were people who had a strong association with alcohol."

Booze soaked deep into the pores of *Clutching At Straws*, from the whisky-and-shattered-dreams anthem *Slàinte Mhath* (a Scottish drinking toast) to *Torch Song*, in which a doctor solemnly intones that if the titular character doesn't stop drinking he *'won't reach thirty'*. The latter referenced Beat author Jack Kerouac's famous quote: "The only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow Roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'"

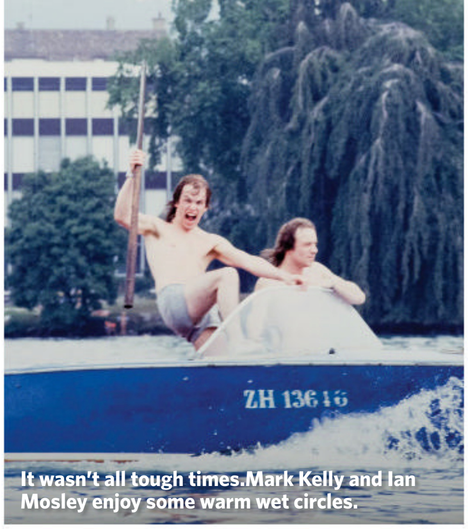


Fish's smile disguises his inner turmoil.

"It felt like, 'Oh: I've got an alcohol problem, I take too many drugs, look at me, I'm a rock star, I've got problems,'" says Kelly. "It was all a bit clichéd and childish. It was over-dramatic, that whole, 'Carry on like this, you won't reach thirty' thing. He did carry on, and he's still with us now."

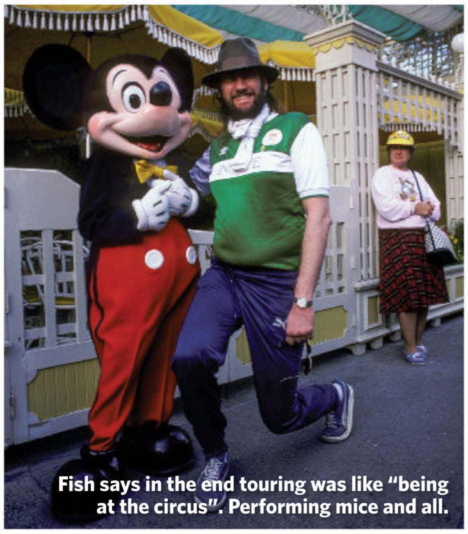
The album's title certainly laid bare the record's over-arching themes,

COURTESY OF MARK WILKINSON AND JANUS VAN HELFTEREN



It wasn't all tough times. Mark Kelly and Ian Mosley enjoy some warm wet circles.

A pensive-looking Steve Rothery and Peter Trewavas.



Fish says in the end touring was like "being at the circus". Performing mice and all.

By *Clutching At Straws* the cracks were showing: (clockwise from top left) Mark Kelly, Fish, Ian Mosley, Peter Trewavas, Steve Rothery.

referencing both alcohol and cocaine use, as well as the fact that the band were, in Fish's words, "desperate to make a big album". The problem was that they simply weren't getting on. One song, *That Time Of The Night*, found Fish's frustrations bubbling to the surface.

"It was my resignation statement: '*So if you ask me where do I go from here, my next destination even isn't really that clear*,'" he says. "Somebody had brought some coke down to the studio, and I ended up doing a couple of lines. Then suddenly I was in abedroom, there was no alcohol, and I couldn't sleep. I wrote most of that lyric that night. I felt really alienated."

"It seemed to be that the thing Fish used to love doing, he started to hate," says Rothery. "He was looking for people to blame."

The powder keg finally exploded towards the end of the recording sessions. An argument flared up, which ended with Fish throwing a whisky tumbler at the guitarist.

"I stormed out and that was it," says Rothery, who says his relationship with Fish had been deteriorating since the time of *Misplaced Childhood*. "I was out of the band for twenty-four hours. But I wasn't really close to Fish at that point. It's unfortunate, because on a personal level we had an amazing chemistry together, but that friendship seemed to gradually dissolve."

After some hastily arranged talks to clear the air, the band pulled themselves back from the brink of self-destruction, at least temporarily, but by then the die had been cast.

"There were a lot of shadowy people around us and a lot of fking drugs on offer."**

Fish

While *Misplaced Childhood* ended on a note of defiant positivity, by *Clutching At Straws* all that had gone; it was the hunched figure with red-rimmed eyes sat glowering in the corner of every pub, trying to drink off last night's hangover.

But it was a strangely romantic album too, one that wore its neurosis and self-pity like a badge. Occasionally, as on the chillingly prescient *White Russian* – inspired by the election of Austrian president Kurt Waldheim, despite rumours of his Nazi involvement during World War II – it looked up from its half-empty glass and gazed outwards to the world at large, only to recoil at what it saw.

Musically it was Marillion's most accomplished and mature album yet. The sharp edges of their first three albums had been smoothed away, and replaced by a sound that ebbed and flowed between triumph and introspection. The band may still have worked by hammering together jigsaw pieces, but the likes of *Warm Wet Circles* and the tender *Sugar Mice* – inspired, as the opening lines suggest, by a day stuck in a depressing Holiday Inn in Milwaukee while the rain poured down outside – pointed towards the band's post-Fish future.

Clutching At Straws was released in June 1987, and peaked at No.2 on the UK album chart – one place less than *Misplaced Childhood*, which had reached the top spot. The champagne corks popped, although any celebrations were soured by the mood within the band. ▷

MARILLION PRES COURTESY OF MARK WILKINSON

Mind the gap: Fish (left) and Pete Trewavas in 1988 as the gulf between the singer and the rest of the band was widening.

"We weren't getting on, and by the time we got to the tour it was intolerable," says Fish. "The tour bus was not a good place to be. We all sat in different positions, nobody saying anything. The gang mentality had broken up."

Except it hadn't. Not quite. The band was certainly fracturing, but on one side was the singer and on the other was everybody else.

"I remember avoiding Fish on tour," says Mark Kelly. "He was in twenty-four/seven party mode. He'd say: 'Come on, let's go out.' You'd go out, but he wouldn't want you to leave. He'd make you feel like a terrible bastard for wanting to go to bed at three a.m."

From the outside it looked like Marillion were flying. The first single from the album, *Incommunicado*, had reached the Top 10, and *Sugar Mice* and *Warm Wet Circles* reached the Top 40. They were playing arenas across Europe. But despite the commercial success, being a member of Marillion in 1987 through 1988 was a lonely place to be.

"I was going on stage every night and feeling like I was playing by myself," says keyboard player Kelly. "I was up on this big riser, away from everybody, and Ian was on this big riser across the stage. You become separated from everything. At one point, Pete said: 'I think I saw somebody up in the lighting truss during the show.' The manager said: 'Yeah, you've got ten people up there, operating things.'"

"We were in a bit of a bubble," adds Trewavas. "We couldn't go anywhere without security. We had to check into hotels under pseudonyms. We couldn't just go and do a sound-check, it had to be: 'So-and-so is going to pick you up at this time, then you're going to drive around to the back of the building, that's going to take about forty minutes.' Everything was being over-thought."

"It was just fucking draining," says Fish. "We were playing these concrete halls in Italy with shite sound, and I'd just had enough. You've got to remember, I'm going out there every night singing about how shite it is being out on the road. There was a kind of feedback loop going on. If I was singing ABBA songs, it would have felt a lot better."

"I think Fish probably felt the pressure more than anyone else. Maybe we could have been a bit more understanding about that."

Peter Trewavas

Everyone involved says that the problem could have been relieved if they'd been allowed to have a break from touring – and from each other. But their management was determined to keep them on the road, to the detriment of the band itself.

"These were people who had been great friends of mine," Fish says. "We were comrades. But we were so distant from each other. John Arnison should have said: 'Everybody, go away for a year. Fish, go and do some acting. Steve, go and write some soundtrack music.'"

In June 1988, a year after *Clutching At Straws* was released, Marillion played the Radrennbahn Weissensee cycling track in East Berlin in front of 95,000 people. It should have been a triumph, but things had reached the point of no return.

"The gig was incredible," says Ian Mosley. "But we came off stage and people were saying: 'I didn't really enjoy that.' That's when alarm bells went off: 'If you didn't enjoy that, then something is very wrong.'"

A month later, the band headlined Fife Aid, a poorly attended charity gig at Craigtoun Country Park in St Andrews organised by TV naturalist David Bellamy. It was, Steve Rothery recalls, "a fairly dismal day all round". They didn't know it at the time – although they might have sensed it – but it would be Marillion's last gig with Fish.

"Things had started going properly wrong at the end of the *Clutching At Straws* tour," says Trewavas. "After that, there was a kind of reluctance to get together and work."

There was a last-ditch attempt to salvage things. The band began working on new material in Trewavas's garage, before eventually decamping to Dalnaglar Castle, a stately pile in Perthshire which was miles away from civilisation.

"That was a terrible mistake," says Kelly. "Not only were we not getting on, we didn't really want to be together, and we had nowhere to go."

"We went back to the same routine," says Fish. "It was the same bits going up on the fucking blackboard: this is the Joni Mitchell section, this is the Floyd section… There we were again, in the same shit." ▷

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A gulf had opened up between what the rest of the band wanted and what their singer wanted, and neither side was ready to compromise.

"I don't know if he thought we weren't giving his ideas much of a try," says Trewavas. "But then some of his lyrics weren't quite what we wanted to work on, either."

The music the band recorded in Dalnaglar, and during an earlier session in Nettlebed, near Reading, wouldn't go to waste, with some of it ending up on Marillion's first two post-Fish albums: *Season's End* and *Holidays In Eden*. Similarly, the singer's lyrics would reappear on his debut solo album, *Vigil In A Wilderness Of Mirrors*, and the title track of its follow-up, *Internal Exile*. But, as bassist Trewavas puts it: "Something had to give." And they didn't have long to wait before it did.

Bob Ezrin had been scoped out to produce Marillion's next album. The American, who had worked on such landmark records as Lou Reed's *Berlin*, Kiss's *Destroyer* and Pink Floyd's *The Wall*, flew to the UK to meet the band.

"Bob came down to meet the band in some studio in Surrey," says Fish. "He said: 'Okay, play me what you've got.' And the band played all the bits and pieces they had. And Bob said: 'There are no songs here. These are just bits.' After Bob left, the band started going: 'Alright, let's try joining this bit on to this bit.' And I just went: 'This is a waste of fucking time. I can't deal with it.'"

Fish headed to his cousin's house in Wiltshire. "I drunk a forty-fluid-ounce bottle of Jim Beam on my fucking own, and I was still standing, because I was so stressed and tense."

He woke up the next morning with a clear head, and made a decision that would change his life and also alter the course of Marillion.

"I wrote a five-page letter, got it photocopied at a local office suppliers, and paid for a taxi driver to deliver it to everybody else's house. I basically said: 'Either fundamental changes are made within the management and we get rid of John Arnison or I'm leaving.' The next thing, I get a phone call from management saying: 'The band have decided to accept your resignation.'"

"Fish said he wanted fifty per cent of all the publishing and all the writing," says Mosley. "That's when it got out of hand. Everybody said: 'This has gone too far.'"

"Nowadays we're absolutely fine. We all get on pretty well. I still consider them friends."

Fish

This is where memories diverge. Mark Kelly says that Fish spoke to the band's manager a few days later, suggesting that he might have made a hasty decision. Fish refutes that. But whatever happened, the outcome was irrefutable: Fish was no longer a member of Marillion.

Speaking separately to the rest of the band today, they all use the same word to describe the emotions they went through in the aftermath of Fish's departure: relief.

"Because things had got so difficult," says Rothery. "Fish had never really had anything to do with the writing of the music. So we knew that our musical identity was still there. We had a lot of great ideas. Maybe, slightly naïvely, we thought it would be just a case of finding someone to replace him. As if it was ever going to be that easy."

"Fish's departure was: 'Okay, this is part of the process,'" says Peter Trewavas. "Don't get me wrong, it was a big thing, and we had to fill a big hole. It took us a long time to do that."

The split was bitter and nasty. Barbs were exchanged in the press, and there was a debilitating court case between the two sides. It would be a decade before they began speaking again, by which time Fish was deep into his solo career and Marillion had reinvented themselves with their new singer, Steve Hogarth.

"We did go through a very public and very angry divorce," says Fish. "Nowadays we're absolutely fine. We all get on pretty well. I still consider them friends. But to be blunt and honest about it, neither party has ever reached the commercial success we had in the eighties. But I don't miss it. I'm much happier with my lot these days."

Thirty-five years on, *Clutching At Straws* stands as a strangely fitting epitaph to Marillion's best-known 80s line-up in all its fractious, boozy glory. The great 'what if's that surround it – what if Fish had stayed; what if they'd made another album together – are the source of many a drunken argument. But in the end it's all hypothetical. Like Kerouac's Roman candle, the Fish-era line-up of Marillion was always going to fizzle out. Slàinte Mhath, as they say north of the border.

MARILLION PRES COURTESY OF MARK WILKINSON

A BEAUTIFUL

With the release of a new box set of **Slade** live albums, Noddy Holder looks back over the band's glittering career and recalls the shows that delivered the magic.

Words: **Dave Ling**

NOIZE!

GETTY

Noddy Holder and (inset) Jim Lea recording at Command Studios, London, October 1971.

By Noddy Holder's own admission, Slade were "a bunch of show-offs". But boy could they write a hit tune. Between 1971 and '76 alone, the four-piece from the Black Country notched 17 consecutive UK Top 20 smashes, including six Number Ones.

Just as importantly, they knew that live performance is what separates the men from the boys, and the women from the girls. Now, a newly compiled boxed set, *All The World Is A Stage*, which adds three never officially released performances – including a now-legendary rebirth at the 1980 Reading Festival – to a pair of existing live albums – reminds us of Slade's peerless capacity to excite a live audience.

"Fans have been badgering us for years for things they hadn't heard, and I'm really thrilled by the three tapes that were found, because not only is their quality great, they also sum up the various eras of Slade," Slade's former frontman Holder says. "For people that don't know what we were about, here's the place to start."

If the exclusion from the box set of the band's second live album, 1978's *Slade Alive, Vol 2*, is confusing, then Holder is quick to explain: "We've already had a package that was a part of, and we could only include five discs. You know, some people have claimed that *Volume 2* was done in a studio. Which is complete rubbish."

With the discovery and release of those 'lost' tapes, might there exist other gems somewhere in the vaults?

"No," Holder says immediately, then with a laugh: "Mind you, I didn't think there were any before. So obviously I was wrong about that."

Classic Rock joined the still whiskered Holder to look back at the early days of Slade and at those still electrifying live recordings.

Slade Alive!

Recorded at Command Studios, London, October 1971

As future generations of musicians will probably realise only with hindsight, there's really only one way to become a good live band, and that's by getting out there and playing live. There's no substitute for getting in a van, playing gigs no matter what size and to whom, and learning how to make them better.

"Jim [Lea, bass and violin] came to us straight out of school," Holder recalls. "But even before the line-up that people know us for, Dave [Hill, guitar] and Don [Powell, drums] had been in bands before, and so had I. I'd been playing live for three years. In the late 1960s, as the 'N Betweens we played solidly for five years, and we would take

"We'd tried to get on to Reading for the previous few years, but we just weren't cool enough."

any gig we could get, often for terrible money. We'd play ballrooms, pubs, universities and Working Men's Clubs – anything. We went up to Scotland once every month – so often that it was sometimes assumed we were a Scottish band. One of the main reasons was they paid us in cash. Occasionally there were two gigs a night, sleeping in the van. But that's how we learned our chops.

"I was an audience participation merchant from the start, even in groups at school," Holder remembers. "I learned how to 'suck in' an audience and make them part of the show when my mum and dad took me to pantomimes. We would play *Land Of 1000 Dances* by Wilson Pickett, and quite often a dozen people came up on to the stage to dance. Slowly we found the things that worked."

Holder's foghorn voice and magnetic stage presence would develop into priceless twin attributes for Slade, but before that the 'N Betweens began as a five-piece until original frontman Johnny Howells stepped aside.

"There was another lead singer, but he was on six months' notice to leave," Holder recalls fondly. "This guy wouldn't travel to a gig in Plymouth, as he was 'seeing a bird'. So we did it without him and tore the place apart. That was the start of it all."

As a four-piece with Holder at the mic, Slade's prowess as a live band soon developed.

"If you can play Saturday night in a pub in the Black Country, you can take flak from *any* audience," he states. "There was a pub called Wren's Nest, in Dudley, where at ten o'clock on any given Saturday night a fight would break out after drinks had been taken. Every band we knew was afraid of playing there. It had a cage around the stage like in those cowboy movies. Chairs, bottles and tables would fly, but you'd have to carry on. That's how you learned to cope with all that audiences could throw at you – quite literally."

In terms of their style of music, Slade owe a debt to a particular single that moved them, and also to the DJ who gave them a copy.

"At a pub we did regularly in Wolverhampton, a guy played records between the bands," Holder recalls. "When I heard this bloody great song, I asked: 'Is this the Little Richard version of *Get Down And Get With It*?' He replied that it was. And when I asked where I could get hold of it, he gave me his own. For donkey's years, right until the end of our career, that's the song we closed the set with before the encores."

Get Down was thus in Slade's set when they first decided to capture their live performance on record. They had already scored a couple of hit singles with *Coz I Love You* and *Look Wot You Dun*, but with the ensuing live album, comprised of more covers than originals, the Slade you hear on *Alive!* was very much a work in progress.

"Yes, definitely," Holder agrees. "It was our live set at that time. We played lots of covers, including songs by the Moody Blues, Frank Zappa and the Idle Race, even Ted Nugent. But when Chas Chandler [the band's manager and producer, a former member of The Animals] found us he encouraged us to write our own. So *Slade Alive!* was very, very raw. And [although three nights

GETTY x2

Bringing the noize: Slade and (inset) fans at the New Victoria Theatre, London, April 1975.

GETTY x2

"Whether or not they liked us was irrelevant, because we knew that the following day everyone would be talking about us."

were recorded] we took it all from one gig. It's the sound of a rock'n'roll band in full force."

Slade's irreverence shines through when Holder lets rip with a loud and fruity belch during their sensitive cover of The Lovin' Spoonful's *Darling Be Home Soon*.

"That was a total accident," Holder says with a laugh. "But after that album came out and was so successful, I had to do the same thing every night. If I didn't then the fans would go berserk."

By then Slade's unique, attention-grabbing and wonderfully over-the-top image was firmly in place.

"Right from the off, Dave and I developed a cut-throat idea that every time we went on stage we would look colourful," Holder says. "It was all about shock tactics. We wanted people to sit up and go: 'What the fuck is this?' Whether or not they liked us was irrelevant, because we knew that the following day everyone would be talking about us in the pubs. Everything we did was about that, including the volume we played at. Even before becoming famous, we were always deafening."

Live At The New Victoria

Recorded at the New Victoria Theatre, London, April 24, 1975

This previously unreleased show captures Slade at a time when Holder and Lea's songwriting had started to take a more mature turn, via songs like *How Does It Feel* and *Everyday*.

"The fans have been on at us for years to release that one," Holder says. "It's got tracks such as *Thanks For The Memory (Wham Bam Thank You Mam)* and *How Does It Feel* that we never performed live on any other album. This was the time of the [Slade's] *In Flame* movie, so it has *Them Kinda Monkeys Can't Swing*, the type of songs were doing when we went to America."

The show at the New Victoria was among the last the band would play in Britain before basing themselves in the US from mid-1975 to early '77. Slade tried hard to carve a slice of the US market – a move that would cause many of their British fans to feel neglected. On such grounds the switch is now regarded as ill-advised, but Holder says he'd love to be able to go back to those times.

"Oh, most definitely," he insists cheerily. "Some say that moving to the States killed us off, and maybe it did, but there was no choice. We'd been over several times before for short periods of time, and the only way to crack the place was by staying there. By 1975 we decided to have a go at the golden goose.

"It was such a great experience," he continues nostalgically. "I had some of the most brilliant moments of my life. Things like going into a bar in New Orleans and seeing ZZ Top during their blues era. There's no way I could ever regret that. When we had Thin Lizzy playing with us, if I hadn't pulled, me and Brian Robertson would go out after the show to find a bar band to play with. One night we did half an hour with a Mariachi band, him playing bluesy licks over their Mexican music. That would never have happened in Britain, I was just too famous.

"Just because it didn't work out the way we had planned, well… I don't recall anyone [from within Slade] complaining at the time. And when we came back to the UK, musically speaking we were a band revitalised, we were playing shit-hot."

Alive At Reading!

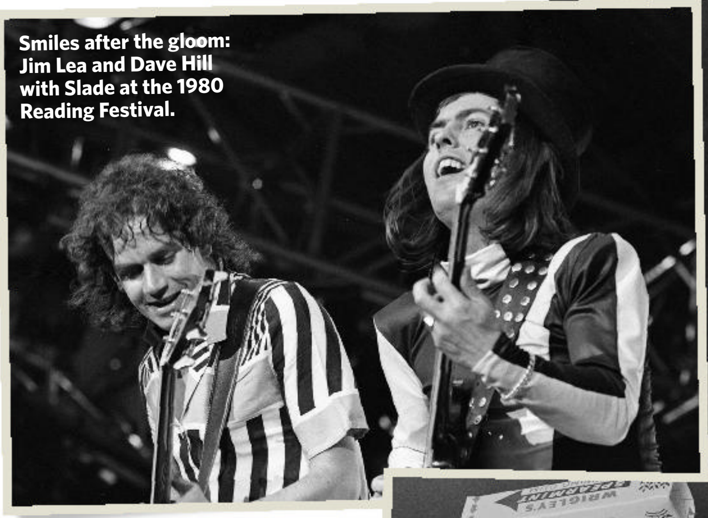
Recorded at the Reading Festival, August 24, 1980

By the summer of 1980, three years after returning to Britain from the US, Holder admits that Slade were "pretty much on the skids". Dave Hill had decided to leave the band. Even when the last-minute offer of a spot on the Reading Festival bill as replacement for Ozzy Osbourne's new group Blizzard Of Ozz came in, Holder couldn't convince the guitarist.

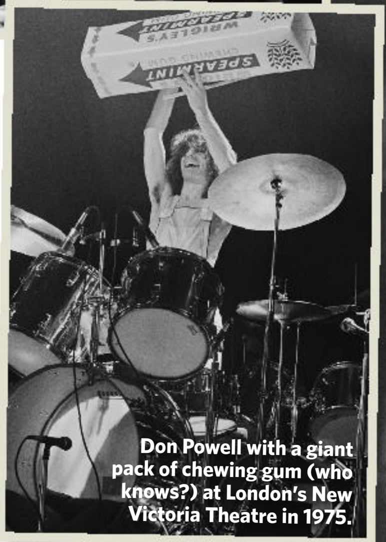
"We'd tried to get on to Reading for the previous few years, but we just weren't cool enough. When the call came, Dave's mind was made up – he didn't want to do it," Holder remembers. "Luckily, Chas was able to persuade him that this was a good place to finish the band: to go out with a bang."

Three days later, Slade arrived at the festival site. They hadn't played for months. Only a few people knew that they had been added to the line-up.

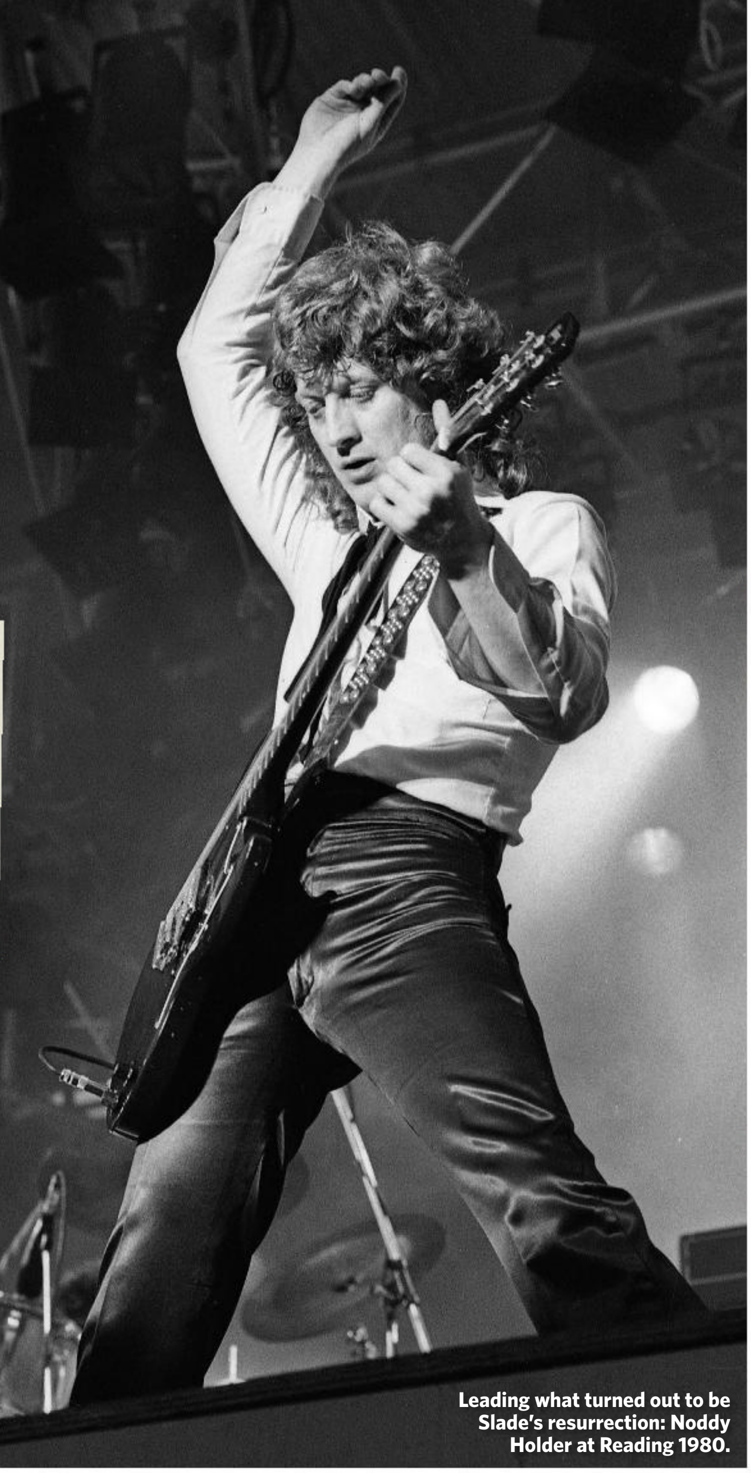
Before they were due to go on stage, the mood in their dressing room was sombre. ▷



Smiles after the gloom: Jim Lea and Dave Hill with Slade at the 1980 Reading Festival.



Don Powell with a giant pack of chewing gum (who knows?) at London's New Victoria Theatre in 1975.



Leading what turned out to be Slade's resurrection: Noddy Holder at Reading 1980.

"Everyone thought it was the last show," Holder says. "Then Tommy Vance from *The Friday Rock Show*, who was acting as compere, walked in and predicted we were going to go down a storm. We weren't so sure; Reading had turned into a metal festival, and that wasn't us. But Tommy was insistent."

There was to be one further twist. "Def Leppard refused to go on before us – they wouldn't open for a bunch of has-beens," Holder says with a chuckle. "So we agreed to swap over. We really didn't give a toss."

What followed was the most unexpected resurrection since Lazarus. With a set that mixed harder-edged new songs such as *When I'm Dancin' I Ain't Fightin'* and *Wheels Ain't Coming Down* with a clutch of well-known hits (*Take Me Bak 'Ome, Mama Weer All Crazee Now, Cum On Feel The Noize* and *Get Down And Get With It*), Slade slayed in the late-afternoon sunlight, peaking with Holder conducting 80,000 denim-clad herberts in a singalong of *Merry Xmas Everybody* – in August.

"In front of the stage there was a pit for the media, which was empty when we went on, but the noise of the crowd was so loud that it filled up right away," Holders marvels. "The audience was perfect for us; a lot of them were kids who had been too young to see us first time around. Def Leppard went on afterwards and they had a hard job following us – they just couldn't."

Slade's set from that fateful day has been bootlegged in the past, but the new boxed set includes the most complete version released officially to date. "It's not the full show from Reading, because we don't have the complete set, but we've put out all that we've got.

"Hearing them again all these years later, these shows made me realise what a fucking good band we were," Holder says proudly. "I even freaked out at my own vocal prowess on all three of the new recordings. 'Fucking hell, how did I sing like that for two hours?'"

Live At The Hucknall Miners' Welfare Club

Recorded at Hucknall Miners' Welfare Club, Nottingham, December 10, 1980

A little under four months after their unlikely triumph at Reading, Slade's bus pulled up at a familiar location. Madison Square Garden this was not.

"We used to really love that place; we played it several times, actually," Holder remembers. "It made a really warm-up for our tours because it always had a great atmosphere."

All the same, it's tough to imagine what goes through the mind of a musician when, having performed on the world's biggest stages, they arrive at what's marginally bigger than a pub gig.

"Def Leppard refused to go on before us – they wouldn't open for a bunch of has-beens."

"To Slade, throughout our career, the size of the audience never mattered," Holder says. "We always gave one hundred per cent, whenever and wherever. I remember playing a club in Bristol back in the sixties on a rainy Tuesday night and eight people turned up. We got all of them up on stage, they did the gig with us, and it was a great night. My ideal capacity is a two-to-three-thousand-seater. Any bigger than that and eye contact becomes impossible.

"It's the atmosphere, and not the size of a show, that's important," he continues. "We always made the night into a party. It's showing off, isn't it?

"Slade was a band of show-offs, basically. It was for me and Dave, anyway. Jim used to tear his hair out over our antics. The punters came along to see how far we'd go; quite often I'd show my arse on stage. Anything to win them over. After a Slade show, people left knowing they'd had a good time."

The turnaround thanks to Reading led to a new record deal, and at the Hucknall gig Slade played several songs – including *Night Starvation, I'm A Rocker, When I'm Dancin' I Ain't Fightin'* and *Wheels Ain't Coming Down* – that would all appear the following year on an album called *We'll Bring The House Down*.

The following year, Slade were invited to play at Monsters Of Rock at Donington Park, on a bill

GEORGE BODNAR ARCHIVE/ICONICPIX x2; GETTY x1

Power to the people: Noddy Holder and Jim Lea at Reading 1980.

headlined by AC/DC that also included Whitesnake and Blue Öyster Cult. So how comfortable did the band feel in their new wardrobe of leather and studs. "I just don't think we thought of it that way," Holder says. "I certainly don't remember being *un*-comfortable."

After a moment's thought he adds: "I don't think we ever really had a pop audience. There were always a lot more blokes and girls, and in the eighties I suppose there were a *lot* more blokes, but there was never a conscious desire to change. And when we got to America [second time around] there were a lot of bands doing exactly what we'd done in the previous decade, especially in LA."

Slade On Stage

Recorded at Newcastle City Hall, December 11, 1981

Slade documented their second spell of popularity with 10 live songs, including a thunderously loud farewell with a cover of *You'll Never Walk Alone* sung by the Newcastle City Hall audience on the tour for their tenth studio album, *Till Deaf Do Us Part*. Its sense of communion is palpable.

"Even from way, way back, Newcastle was always amazing for us – it was Chas's home town, remember – so we did the City Hall on every tour," Holder says, smiling. "We had first appeared there in 1969 as the warm-up act for Amen Corner and Dave Dee, Dozy, Beaky, Mick & Tich. It was an audience of screaming girls, which we'd never seen before. From then on, our tours often opened at the City Hall. Not just for Slade, there's something magical about that place. When we had Thin Lizzy and Suzi Quatro open on a tour for us there, they couldn't believe the hullabaloo. So when we made a third album, Newcastle City Hall was one of the first names on the list."

Within two years, belatedly in the United States Slade's star was rising. "Back in the seventies it had been impossible for us to break through, but by the early eighties, thanks to MTV, that situation had started to change," Holder explains.

After the American band Quiet Riot scored a hit with their cover of Slade's *Cum On Feel The Noize*, Sharon Osbourne took on the band's management, and *Run Runaway* made it into the *Billboard* Top 40.

Unfortunately, after playing just the opening night of a vital support tour with Ozzy the band were forced to head home due to Jim Lea having developed hepatitis C.

The 1987 album *You Boyz Make Big Noize* would be their swansong, although a further hit single, 1991's *Radio Wall Of Sound*, kept the name alive.

"Hearing them again all these years later, these shows made me realise what a fking good band we were."**

Today, having been cited as an influence by artists as diverse as Kiss, Twisted Sister, Oasis, Nirvana, the Ramones, Def Leppard and The Clash, Slade's legacy lives on. As does a desire to see the band perform again. But with all of them in their seventies, each member now acknowledges how remote a possibility that has become. There are also personal issues to consider. A little under two years ago, Holder told *Classic Rock*: "When bands break up it's usually to do with five reasons: egos, money, drink and drugs, women or musical differences. In Slade's case it was all of the above." Which sounds pretty damned final.

"It *is* final. And since I said that, Don and Dave have fallen out," Holder sighs. "At the moment there's no love lost between those two, but that's how it goes with bands; things get said and people are blamed. Tales get distorted."

At the start of 2022, national headlines were made when *The Sun* printed an 'interview' with Holder during which he addressed the possibility of Slade reuniting for the 'legends' spot at Glastonbury. He was quoted as saying: "Maybe we'd have to have glass barriers between us on stage so that there would be no fisticuffs on stage." His manager Colin Newman dismissed the story as a gross distortion. "Everyone went mad, but it was a total and utter lie," Holder clarifies.

All the same, there *were* attempts to put the band back together.

"The last time the four members were in a room together was many years ago for a business meeting," says Holder. "It was like we had split up the day before, not twenty years earlier. Big money was on offer for an eighteen-month world tour, but nobody was willing to compromise. I would never, ever go through that again."

In a pleasing footnote, a month after *The Sun* debacle, Holder's wife Suzan posted a photo of Holder and Hill together with huge smiles.

"I went to his house and we mended our bridges – not that Dave and I really had bridges to fix," Holder says. "I accepted his eccentricity and he accepted my own. There had been some business hassles, but we picked up the phone and discussed them. Dave's a funny bugger, still as daft as he was when I first met him in the mid-sixties."

All The World Is A Stage is available now via BMG.

SHUTTERSTOCK

ON THROUGH THE NIGHT

Dark times won't stop the newly chart-bothering **Massive Wagons**, they assure us – and neither will the bullies, bigots and bent politicians skewered on new album *Triggered!* As frontman Baz Mills bluntly tells us: "Fuck 'em…"

Words: **Henry Yates**

In dark times, nothing lifts the spirits like the arrival of Massive Wagons on your Zoom call. Here's guitarist Adam Thistlethwaite, the Lancaster band's closest thing to a grown-up, his backdrop a tidy assemblage of Marshall stacks, flight cases and framed Ross Halfin prints. There's a hint of a young Roger Waters in his handsome, slightly horse-like features, but thankfully not the Floyd man's totalitarian streak. "We'd never let anyone get above their station," he reasons. "Because you'd just have the piss taken out of you so mercilessly."

And here's singer Baz Mills, looking like Joe Pesci's *Home Alone* burglar in a black knit hat, silver wisps creeping through his beard now he's into his forties, but still dafter than a direct hit with a monkey bomb. "I'm just being an idiot," he groans, struggling to stop the webcam pointing up his nostrils.

Thistlethwaite is speaking from the Lancaster rehearsal space where Massive Wagons work, rest, scheme and drink. Mills appears to be at home, lolling back in his chair to show off the same T-shirt he wore at this year's Download. 'Eat Pies And Talk About Men's Mental Health', orders the unlikely message on his chest.

"I looked like an absolute wanker at Download, didn't I?"

Well, I wouldn't say that, exactly.

"Oh, I would. I was wearing this T-shirt with a black-and-white check jacket, matching shorts and socks. But if you're going to play Download, you want people to remember you for something, don't you? So it might as well be for looking like a complete tosspot."

If Mills hasn't changed his T-shirt since Download – and we're not saying he hasn't, necessarily – then it's understandable. Occupying an ever-higher orbit in the rock firmament, and still largely handling their own affairs, Massive Wagons don't get much downtime for such earthly concerns as laundry these days. New album *Triggered!* won't help that workload. But in truth, their wheels have barely stopped spinning since 2020's *House Of Noise*.

Last time we interviewed the Wagons, they were hawking that fifth album and hoping to top the performance of 2018's *Full Nelson* (an unlikely UK Top 20, in a chart riddled with Ed Sheeran, George Ezra and *The Greatest Showman*). Needless to say, as the best-humoured British rock band since The Darkness, the marketing campaign for *House Of Noise* ended up being gleeful lunacy.

"We bought an old treadmill for 50 quid and did a fucking ridiculous 90s-themed telethon livestream for charity," reflects Mills. Then things got serious. "People don't realise the rollercoaster," he says of *House Of Noise*'s chart tussle. "You get your midweek position, then it's up and down. You're at Number 7. You're at Number 12. But the big bands rest on their laurels. Like, Jarvis Cocker was in there with us. And two members of Westlife – some shite, I dunno. It's like, 'Argh! We need to do more videos!' In the end, that Number 9 for *House Of Noise* made people sit up and go, 'Massive Wagons? Who are these lads?'"

> **"We'd never let anyone get above their station. You'd just have the piss taken out of you."**
>
> **Adam Thistlethwaite**

Who, indeed, have Massive Wagons become since that chart breakthrough? Well, certainly men with impressive alcohol tolerances. "There have been that many piss-ups," says Mills, a little dreamily, "I can't remember half of them."

But definitely not millionaires, shrugs Thistlethwaite. "As amazing as that result was, you don't take a lot home. It's not like, 'Here's a big gold watch.'"

"A Ferrari and a swimming pool?" echoes Mills, shaking his head. "Nah. I've got a puddle full of dog shit out the back of my house. But we're just all happy not to be getting up at five in the morning, laying tarmac."

Doors are opening, though. Over summer, the Wagons trundled out on their biggest European festival run to date, hitting France, Switzerland, Germany, ▷

DEAN CHALKLEY/PRESS

Staying calm: the band have channelled their rage into their new album.

Belgium. "Graspop was incredible," beams Thistlethwaite. Then he shudders: "But I've never experienced heat like that onstage."

"The heat has been brutal this summer," picks up Mills. "I think it was 36 degrees at Graspop. Our bassist said he came close to vomiting onstage."

Returning to the UK, the band instead topped up their studio tans at Andy Sneap's Backstage facility in rural Derbyshire, recalling *House Of Noise* producers Chris Clancy and Colin Richardson to repeat the commercial trick.

But not the musical one, stresses Thistlethwaite. "We've never had an agenda, but maybe on some level we were writing for the radio before. You know, keep the single in mind, get to the chorus in forty seconds. But with *Triggered!*, we let the songs speak for themselves. I was listening to a lot of Ghost. You can hear that in *Sawdust*, it's more theatrical and punkier. I've always loved Green Day, Offspring, Rise Against, that kind of anger. And we didn't worry about things like swearing if it's part of the emotional content."

Ah yes, the swearing. If you've heard anything from *Triggered!*, it's likely lead-off single *Fuck The Haters*, with Mills's battlecry calling out all those who would tear down your freak flag. "The record label picked that one to deliberately poke the hornets' nest," remembers Thistlethwaite.

"*Fuck The Haters* was meant to be a festival song, middle fingers in the air," adds Mills. "The song relates to the stuff I see online. For instance, there's a post that goes around of a guy with tattoos on his face, big ear-stretchers, things in his lips. It always says, 'Would you give this guy a job?' And all the comments are just sickening, these torrents of abuse: 'What the fuck does he look like?' I had that picture in my head. I just thought, 'Fuck 'em.'"

The cover art of *Triggered!* nods to that image – a heavily tattooed mosher with lavender eyeshadow – while the title track is a close cousin to *Fuck The Haters*, Mills reeling off the myriad intolerances of the keyboard generation over a faintly Terrorvision-ish bounce. "The world seems to revolve around social media and there are no consequences," reasons the singer.

"Not half an hour ago," he continues, "I was reading a statement from Crossfaith: they've just cancelled their tour, they can't afford to come over. And the comments had no sympathy, no remorse, no understanding, just firing a barrage of shit at this band. And it's like, where does this attitude come from? It's awful. That's the centre of the universe for this album, really."

No wacky treadmill campaign this time around. Instead, Mills and Thistlethwaite have released a series of spoken-word videos giving advice to bullying victims (and donated a slice of profits to the Sophie Lancaster Foundation). This stuff is personal to you, not just virtue-signalling, isn't it?

> **"The world seems to revolve around social media and there are no consequences."**
>
> **Baz Mills**

Mills nods. "Yeah. There was a core of bullies that made my life a misery as a kid. Unfortunately for me, they all lived in my town and I went through primary school, secondary school and a two-year college course with them. Kids are awful, aren't they? They're terrible. They're brutal. I was the smallest in the class, so I was an easy target."

The band all still live around Lancaster. Was there not a temptation – when *House Of Noise* went Top 10, say, or after you detonated Download – to knock on a few doors and serve up a few dishes of stone-cold revenge?

"Nah, they're all big lads," says Mills. "If [the band's success] pisses them off then they're stuck in their sad little world, aren't they? That's enough for me. I don't have to go back there. I'm happy with my life. I've got nothing more to do with those people. It's all good. I can walk down the middle of Lancaster now without getting my head kicked in."

To be clear, *Triggered!* isn't just about bullying, and the Wagons occasionally stray from their default setting of sugar-bomb festival bangers. One standout is *Please Stay Calm*, with a wistful chime unlike anything in the catalogue ("We've not touched on that *Hysteria*-tinged sound, almost like The Police," says Thistlethwaite) and Mills hilariously undercutting expectations of his new rock star status.

"You don't want people to look behind the curtain and realise that most nights you're sat at home thinking, 'My library books are overdue.' The closest I get to trouble with the police is giving them the Vs under the dashboard. So I suppose *Please Stay Calm* is a stab at myself for being a pale comparison of Ozzy Osbourne."

If Massive Wagons remain light, charming interviewees, then as Mills and Thistlethwaite run through the tracklisting, you can't help notice anger is a recurring theme. "The first song we wrote was *Gone Are The Days*," says the singer of the choppy, string-augmented standout. "I'd watched this live Paul Weller stuff, him trying to kill that guitar. He was so angry when he played, and in his suit, it looks ridiculous, like an angry businessman. That song, it's mod, it's punk. I think that's the most British song on the album."

As for *Germ*, its cascading arpeggios conceal Mills's biting rebuke to Boris and co. "After I left the Air Force, I worked as a truck driver for sixteen years. Last year, when there was a driver shortage, I had a letter from the government asking me to go back to driving wagons. I just thought to myself, 'Well, you've never done anything to help me.' I didn't qualify for any money through lockdown because I'd only been self-employed for a year."

Mills's ire builds all the way to closers *Sawdust* and *No Friend Of Mine*. "*Sawdust* is about another musician who had it in for us. Somebody we held in high regard, but they came at us with a stick. *No Friend Of Mine* is about friends you might go for a drink with… not your best friends, more friends of friends. And then, over lockdown, they're all posting online and this hatred starts spewing out of them, all these 'Don't let people in this country' posts. And it's like, 'I used to go and watch bands with you…'"

Armed with these songs, it's tempting to herald *Triggered!* as the next leap forward in Massive Wagons' unbroken trajectory. But can a mid-table band really keep rising when the cost-of-living crisis is threatening the death blow to a scene still teetering post-Covid? "I can already see it happening," nods Mills. "Anthrax have cancelled their European tour. I can see clubs and pubs closing. We're touring with Ugly Kid Joe in November, which is amazing. But I don't know what the future holds for Massive Wagons. If we have a massive hit, wonderful. But as long as I don't have to drive a bus, I'm fine."

They've faced off against bullying, weathered a global pandemic and now fancy their chances against a recession. Is there anything that could bring this band down? Mills thinks for a moment. "Roy's farts. Our drummer. They're awful. They could bring more than the band down…"

Triggered! is released October 28 on Earache Records.

DEAN CHALKLEY/PRESS

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Ronnie Dio

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The Hard Stuff Albums

The Mars Volta

The Mars Volta *CLOUDS HILL*

Thought the Mars Volta had confounded you enough? Nope, here's their pop album.

Never underestimate The Mars Volta's ability to surprise even their most ardent fans. Going back to the earliest days of their first band, At The Drive-In, Cedric Bixler-Zavala and Omar Rodríguez-López have been musical chameleons, shapeshifting from artful, furious hardcore punk to make way for the explosion of prog rock, jazz, alt.rock and Latin beats of The Mars Volta. And now, coming a decade and a short-lived split after their last album, *Noctourniquet*, they have boldly and unexpectedly gone pop, with their self-titled new collection landing neatly between smooth, espradille-clad yacht rock and slinky R&B.

There's a darkness at the heart of it all. The band came to a halt in 2013 after Bixler-Zavala joined the Church of Scientology, ostensibly to try to deal with a crippling weed habit. He did not have a great experience and has since been vocal in his criticism of the organisation – not least because his wife, actor Chrissie Carnell, was among the members to accuse fellow Scientologist Danny Masterson (her former co-star on *That '70s Show* and one-time partner) of rape (something he denies).

Bixler-Zavala's fury at that hellish predicament is plain throughout this record. *'I'll shine the blackest light, to the culprit on all fours,'* he sings on *Blacklight Shine*. In times past, this sentiment would have been backed with an impenetrable wall of noise. Here it's met with MOR funk worthy of Hall & Oates, backed with slinky rattlesnake percussion. Arguably, this is the first time in The Mars Volta that Bixler-Zavala's voice has taken centre stage, Rodríguez-López's firework fretwork taking a backseat for a more subtle instrumentation, not least on *Shire Story*. A moonlit take on R&B that owes a debt to Prince, it's romantic, even sexy, in a way that is completely new to them.

Elsewhere, the swooning 80s pop of *Vigil*, the Latin soul of *Qué Dios De Maldiga Mí Corazón* and the heavy reggae of *Equus 3* show a band stretching themselves for their own satisfaction, whatever the expectation of their usual audience. Even *No Case Gain*, with the spikier vocals of old, is tempered by an atmospheric musical base that suggests a love of early Talk Talk. It's all so *tasteful*. Where once they would gallop, here they lope, they slide, giving themselves all the time in the world. Hardcore fans of the weird stuff are going to hate it. It's hard to imagine this duo of aural adventurers giving a fig about that. This is clearly the right music for this stage in their musical evolution. It's good to see that they're still keeping us guessing.

Emma Johnston

Goat

Oh Death *ROCKET*

Secretive Swedes summon up more strangeness.

If there's one thing Goat haven't done in the six years since last album *Requiem* was released, it's become any easier to pigeonhole. The mysterious Swedes still sound less Swedish than any other Swedish band ever, twisting plundered sonics from every part of the world apart from their own into wild, ritualistic shapes.

Chukua Pesa sounds like the sort of thing Robert Plant might have brought back with him from a successful field trip to the Malian desert. *Under No Nation* struts like Fela Kuti before flipping blithely into free-jazz skronk via Blondie. *Do The Dance* is Burundi Black meets Adam Ant meets Daisy Chainsaw meets Tom Tom Club. *Goatmilk* is Curtis Mayfield produced by Lee Perry until it's something else altogether; eventually it's Jethro Tull playing Afro-jazz. *Apegoat* is possibly made from bees. And *Blow The Horns* manages all of the above until Thin Lizzy-ish twin guitars arrive to herald the fade. It's as confusing as hell, but it's also thrilling, occasionally daft, and deliriously, gloriously imaginative. Goat's best album.

Fraser Lewry

Archers Of Loaf

Human *MERGE*

North Carolina's indie rockers make a strong return.

It's 24 long years since Archers Of Loaf put out their last album, *White Trash Heroes*, and while they've faded from many a memory in that time, their comeback is a belting reminder of just how great the mid-90s American indie rock scene was. Not that this is a rehash of former glories. Written in the midst of a lockdown-fuelled breakdown, *Human* takes on vast themes (*"It's hard to be human, only death can set you free,"* sings frontman Eric Bachmann on the title track) and marries it to punchy anthems that place them firmly alongside the likes of Sugar and Pavement, thanks not least to a deft, barbed lyrical wryness.

Pealing guitars from Eric Johnson add a cinematic edge, particularly to the sweeping *In The Surface Noise* (once you get past the fact that it sounds, in the opening moments, exactly like Cliff Richard's *Wired For Sound*), while the haunting closer *War Is Wide Open* lingers long after the last note fades away. This is a return they can be proud of.

Emma Johnston

Ugly Kid Joe

Rad Wings Of Destiny *METALVILLE*

Rad all over.

Will the real Ugly Kid Joe please stand up? It's a question that's been asked ever since the California brat pack formed in 1989. Are they metallers (note the puntastic Judas Priest album title), hard rockers, country balladeers or a covers band? Answer: all of the above. And the frustrating thing is, everything they do, they do exceedingly well.

This, UKJ's first full-length since 2015, and only their fifth overall, rocks up a treat on *That Ain't Livin'* and *Dead Friends Play*: AC/DC to the core and friskier than any recent output from Angus's mob. *Not Like The Other* is top-notch bovver-rock, while *Kill The Pain* exudes Bon Jovi-esque pomp. For the country stuff, check out mournful ballad *Everything's Changing* and the meditative *Long Road*. Then there's a suitably sleazy cover of The Kinks' *Lola* and, mixing things up further, the sparse, shuddering funk of *Up In The City*. A call to Confused.com may well be in order.

Geoff Barton

Robyn Hitchcock

Shufflemania! *TINY GHOST*

First album in five years, with guests including Sean Ono Lennon and Johnny Marr.

Were he not quite so eccentric or prolific, Robyn Hitchcock might be regarded with a little more gravitas. Lockdown and burnout have put him out of action in recent years, so his return is a refreshing one.

Hitchcock describes *Shufflemania!* as a "party" album, even if it's a "party of one" and that's borne out on the barrelling exuberance of *The Shuffle Man*. Thereafter, however, the mood

FAT BOB/PRESS

is limpid and reflective, the styles eclectic but generally harking back to the architecture of 60s pop, from Spector to the Stones, all ably coloured-in by guest musicians including Pat Sansone of Wilco. There are shades of mortality, as on *The Man Who Loves The Rain*, while the honky-tonkish *The Raging Muse* feels like a meditation on the strange, compulsive condition of Being Robyn Hitchcock. *One Day (It's Being Scheduled)* concludes on a compassionate, positive note.

David Stubbs

Hugh Cornwell

Moments Of Madness HIS RECORDS

Hasta la pasta.

The one constant with Hugh Cornwell albums is that they're never dull. That's because he doesn't like to repeat himself, his lyrics are observant and his vocal style is simple but effective. His USP for his tenth solo album is that he's played all the instruments himself, which gives it a kind of retro feel – although it also proves that you can't beat a real drummer, even if you wouldn't necessarily want him in the van.

There are autobiographical touches to the opening *Coming Out Of The Wilderness* and *When I Was A Young Man*, and he gets up close and personal while keeping his emotions in check on *Iwannahideinsideaya* and *Heartbreak At Seven*.

Elsewhere, the album's title track greets the end of lockdown with a reggae splash, *Red Rose* is about tattoos and *Lasagna* praises the culinary skills of some Italian friends in Mexico.

Hugh Fielder

Simple Minds

Direction Of The Heart BMG

Veteran Scot-rock stadium flouncers continue their autumnal purple patch.

Conventional wisdom holds that Simple Minds made a Faustian pact in the mid-80s, trading their future-facing post-punk promise for the cop-out option of bloated stadium success. Which is mostly true, but Jim Kerr and Charlie Burchill have engineered a respectable creative comeback over the past decade, revisiting their early synth-rock sound through wiser middle-aged eyes, scoring Top 10 albums and generally warm reviews in the process. *Direction Of The Heart* continues this trajectory with sleek, spangled, guitar-keening anthems like *First You Jump* and the soulful, croaky-voiced *Planet Zero*. Looking backwards to look forward, Kerr and Burchill also revisit their clunky 1978 funk-rock number *Act Of Love* and pay fond tribute to the late Michael Been from The Call, an early support band, with a rousing cover of *The Walls Came Down* from 1983. Despite a handful of anodyne plodders, it is difficult to dislike Simple Minds in this nostalgic late-career mode, elder statesmen with nothing left to prove.

Stephen Dalton

Brant Bjork

Bougainvillea Suite

HEAVY PSYCH SOUNDS RECORDS

A son of the desert goes back in time.

Prolific multi-instrumentalist Brant Bjork seems to have delved into the 60s section of his record collection as inspiration for *Bougainvillea Suite*, so awash are these eight tracks with that signature period organ sound – a bit like The Doors or Iron Butterfly indulging in a groovy bit of dusty desert rock. Stöner band mate Ryan Güt provides the vintage keys, most prominent on *Trip On The Wine*, hypnotic *Broke That Spell* and riffy *Bread For Butter*, the latter also featuring Stöner's Nick Oliveri on backing vocals and wonky lead guitar. While much of this involves Bjork finding a riff and thumping it into submission, not least on the intoxicating nine-minute jam of Bo Diddley's *Who Do You Love*, tunes like the rolling *Ya' Dig*, dreamy *Let's Forget* and spritely 60s pop of *So They Say* provide much-needed variety, making this heavy and mellow all in one sweet-smelling hit.

Essi Berelian

Jean-Michel Jarre

Oxymore SONY MUSIC

Posthumous team-up project offers mixed results.

Jean-Michel Jarre's mooted partnership with musique concrète pioneer Pierre Henry was curtailed by the composer's death in 2017. And that would have been that, had it not been for Henry's widow offering the electronics innovator stems of recordings made by her late husband in preparation for their combined effort.

Sadly, *Oxymore* is an album that asks more questions than it offers answers, chief among them being the pondering of how this album would've sounded had Henry lived. Rather than using the stems as the basis of new material, Jarre has elected to use them more as samples added on to his own compositions. As displayed by the title track and the pumping *Brutalism*, *Oxymore* feels stuck in the 90s rather than the work of two trailblazers, though at least *Epica*'s hands-in-the-air dynamics feels fresher.

Julian Marszalek

O.R.k.

Screamnasium KSCOPE

Fourth album from Anglo-Italian proggers.

When Robert Fripp said: "Music is the cup which holds the wine of silence," he could have been theorising over this band. When the raging prog of *Screamnasium* abates to reveal a core of quietness, the sound of O.R.k. becomes a vessel of beauty.

The quartet – ex-Porcupine Tree bassist Colin Edwin, singer LEF, King Crimson drummer Pat Mastelotto and guitarist Carmelo Pipitone – *revel* in the quiet/loud dynamic, pitching gentle dexterity against bludgeon. Opener *As I Leave* is a perfect example of the effect. On the more frantic *Unspoken Words*, LEF sings over fabulous drumming and bass-playing with shades of Chris Cornell. Then on *Hope For The Ordinary* and *Something Broke*, Pipitone riffs the house down in splendid fury. All this plus Italian vocalist Elisa on *Consequence* and virtuoso cellist Jo Quail on closer *Someone Waits*. Drink it all in.

Neil Jeffries

ROUND-UP: SLEAZE

By Sleazegrinder

Dead Furies: worth climbing a mountain for.

RAUNO VAHTRE/ PRESS

Dead Furies

Ready When You Are

DRAGSTRIP RIOT

Estonia's finest sons return with another mega-dose of what they do best: sleazy, sinister, glammy hard rock. You know the drill: leather pants, mirror shades, 69 Eyes, Backyard Babies, stacks of amps, grease, grit, good times. There's a dash of 90s alt.rock in there too, maybe even a synth or two. Definitely some rolling R's. It's arena rock for cool kids. So, here's what I need you to do. Find a mountain. Can't be that hard to do, they're easy to spot. Strap an oversized 80s boombox to your back. Make sure you have this record on it somehow. I'm sure Dead Furies will sell you a cassette. Climb to the top of the mountain. Play *Bringer Of The Night* as loud as you can while exalting in your rock'n'roll majesty. Maybe wear a cape. Hopefully there's some cinematic wind to blow your hair back. I just don't think you're gonna get the full effect any other way.

Durty Triix

Crackin' Skulls And Crushin' Bones SELF-RELEASED

As their horrendous spelling might reveal, Durty Triix have some affection for 80s glam. They're also from Sydney, and any Aussie rock band must have at least 60% AC/DC in their DNA. It all gels in this sleazy ode to excess, full of sexually agressive women and up-for-it lads. If you've ever had a really good night on the bad side of town, you'll love it.

Pocket Monzzter

Titty Inspector SELF-RELEASED

Ukraine's least-reputable rock'n'roll band delivers a carnival ride to the abyss, featuring walls of fuzz and vox belched through an echoplex of distortion. There's shades of The Cramps, Sonics and other purveyors of garage-punk skronk, but they sound like their own weird thing. Songs like *Sexist Boogie* and the title track seem tongue in cheek, but who knows. Wild.

Jesus Chrüsler Supercar

Lucifer SELF-RELEASED

Burly Swedes plying burly death'n'roll in the mid-period Entombed vein, i.e. lots of Tom Warrior grunts and rock'n'roll guitars that sound like polar bears are playing 'em. I am both impressed and terrified at their ferocity. Either way, this is a gang you'll wanna join. *High Times For Low Crimes* is clearly their anthem. Should be yours, too.

Colt Cobra

Fuzzy & Wild SELF-RELEASED

Maracas shaking wildly, screaming through a broken microphone, dirty guitars playing dirty licks way past midnight... This Brazilian power trio let it all hang out on this ode to bad fun. It's sorta like The Hellacopters if they knew how to limbo or surf or roast a pig. They definitely deliver on the album's title. I have personally never had this much fun, but I aspire to.

The Hard Stuff

ALBUMS

DEAN CHALKLEY/PRESS

Massive Wagons

Triggered! EARACHE

Maverick northwest crowd-pleasers deliver once again.

If ever a band seemed determined to keep one foot in the pub and the other on the monitors of an enormodome (spiritually if not physically), it's this Lancaster mob. Not an easy balance to maintain, but in the process they're slowly carving themselves a niche in British rock that sounds unique to them.

On this sixth album Massive Wagons show that they're also fine-tuning their formula. And for a band who pride themselves on providing a supremely fun night out, they're not scared to be topical or make a point or two about the turbulent popular culture swirling around them.

'I try not to swear in our songs… fuck the haters,' goes the deathless chorus of the opener and recent single, punctuating marginally more subtle verses taking aim at online trolls and bullies of all stripes.

So yeah, they still want to rock and roll all night. But their minds are on something a little more profound than just partying every day. *No Friend Of Mine* digs at the curiously tenuous relationships found on social media, *Generation Prime* skewers complacent, entitled peers expecting the world by next-day delivery, and the title track swipes at culture warriors' intolerance fuelled by galloping spandex-trousered attack.

It's never without humour, though – perhaps to their detriment. Their ability to make The Darkness sound like Crass in the gag-averse stakes will surely see them perennially cursed with the 'joke band' tag. But then a song like *A.S.S.H.O.L.E.* will resonate far more powerfully than any nuanced treatise on social mores could ever do, while making the same points, because if you can get people punching the air and screaming along, you're already winning the battle for hearts and minds.

More withering social satire abounds on *Please Stay Calm*'s modern-day Kinksian vignette where a politely rebellious protagonist admits, *'I'm sinking foot-long subs with extra cheese… I deliberately drove through amber lights… 33 in the 30 causin' a scene.'* But in each case the booming hooks and thumping choruses are present and correct. Meanwhile, although opinions may divide over the ska interludes on *Generation Prime* (featuring Dub War/Skindred main man Benji Webbe on guest vocals), their attempts to inject fiercer thrash metal doses into *Sawdust* show their breaks from their own musical formula can pay dividends.

Maybe their very British, punky and unpretentious attitude will mean Massive Wagons never quite reach the arenas these songs seem tailor-made for. But we're firmly on board their souped-up transit van heading that way.

Johnny Sharp

Roger Taylor

The Outsider Tour Live

QUEEN ONLINE

Queen drummer's scorching solo live set.

October 2021 saw the Queen drummer reaffirming that he's more than that with an "intimate" (by his standards) UK tour. Ostensibly, it showcased his deft and topical album *The Outsider*, bringing that lockdown creation out for some interaction and oxygen. However it also reminded enthusiastic crowds of his own contributions to Queen, regaling the faithful with Taylor compositions such as *Radio Ga Ga* (a synchronised handclap-inducing lodestone), *Tenement Funster*, *These Are The Days Of Our Lives* and *I'm In Love With My Car*. Before the last, he quips: "That movie *Bohemian Raspberry* took the piss out of this song… fuck 'em."

His voice retains lithe, lemony character. *Under Pressure* is boldly attempted by a remarkably adept band, then when Brian May joins in (at the London show) for *Tutti Frutti* and *A Kind Of Magic*, the crowd noise soars off the scale. Dedicated to Taylor Hawkins, this documents a tidy triumph.

Chris Roberts

Dead Cross

II IPECAC

Metal allstars aren't just dead cross, they're *really* miffed.

All music is deeply personal to the people who create it, but some albums take on a greater meaning than others. A pitch-black piece of work run through with pain, anger and fury, the second Dead Cross album was recorded as guitarist Michael Crain battled advanced cancer, often coming to record straight after chemo sessions. The treatment was, he says, the "catalyst for every riff" on the record, and you can believe it – *II* is absolutely *filthy*.

The pedigree of this band is impeccable, with Slayer's Dave Lombardo on drums, The Locust's Justin Pearson on bass and Faith No More's Mike Patton amping up the creepville vocals, and there's a sense that, away from their main bands, this is an excuse for them to stretch out without any pressure to see where the music takes them. And where it takes them is to hell and back, wrapped in a cacophony of brilliantly bleak, decidedly queasy, uncompromising metal and face-pummelling punk rock. This is absolutely horrible and therefore highly recommended.

Emma Johnston

The Pretty Reckless

Other Worlds CENTURY MEDIA

Fourth long-player's roads not taken.

As strong as the material was on The Pretty Reckless's fourth album *Death By Rock And Roll*, it's a little hard to justify it being remixed and padded out on a repackaged semi-new album, as it is here with covers, acoustic versions and remixes.

On its own terms, it's a perfectly tidy record: the reading of *25* doesn't have as much sweeping orchestral drama as the original but is still effective, while the slower take on *Got So High* offers just as much emotional heft. The acoustic take on the last album's title track is also worth your time but does the world really need another Bowie cover (*Quicksand*) even if Mike Garson is on piano? Likewise the takes on Soundgarden's *Loud Love* and *Halfway There* are robust but, let's face it, inessential. *Other Worlds*, then – worth a quick visit for die-hard fans, but no need to hang about too long.

Johnny Sharp

Various

The Retaliators Original Motion Picture Soundtrack BETTER NOISE MUSIC

Rock, metal and horror – perfect companions.

Basically serving (mostly) as a sampler for the Better Noise Music roster, this soundtrack to Better Noise Films' new horror flick throws together a diverse bunch of bands and creators across its 19 tracks, punctuated by ominous snippets of dialogue (and screaming) from the movie. Highlights include The Hu (*This Is Mongol* and *Wolf Totem* are magnificent), rockers Classless Act (with Vince Neil), Crossbone Skully sounding like Rhino Bucket on *Evil World Machine* and Tempt unleashing the upbeat Def Lep-esque *Living*

Dangerous. On the odd and not-so-successful side we have Tommy Lee's *Tops* featuring rapper Push Push. And then we have dark and dramatic contributions from Five Finger Death Punch (*Darkness Settles In*), Asking Alexandria (*Faded Out*), Papa Roach (*The Ending*) and Bad Wolves (*If Tomorrow Never Comes*) among others. A solid modern rock and metal compilation.

Essi Berelian

Billy Idol

The Cage EP DARK HORSE

Stanmore's finest gets his motor running.

Groovy grandad Billy hasn't burst out of his straitjacket too often since 2014's comeback album and autobiography, but this four-track EP, following last year's one *The Roadside*, is well-judged fun. It's precision-tooled pop-rock, just slightly heavier than it needs to be. Each compact, catchy track bursts with energy and a disarming awareness of exactly what a Billy Idol number should be – part cartoon, part rip-roaring raunch. With Steve Stevens co-writing and chugging out the dynamics, we get a thoroughly jumping jailbreak.

There's solid songcraft too, as the titular fizzer makes every transition count, and *Running From The Ghost* discusses Idol's demons with a wink rather than a wallow. *Rebel Like You* is self-referential but witty and spry, while *Miss Nobody* has the singer deploying a distant cousin of rapping and even swaggers towards the disco like Kiss's *I Was Made For Lovin' You* is its wingman. More more more!

Chris Roberts

Robert Jon & The Wreck

Wreckage Vol 2 KBTA

Another step towards southern-rock royalty.

With half a dozen albums cut and formidable live reputation forged over the past decade, Robert Jon Burrison and co have steadily powered their way upwards, recently signing to Joe Bonamassa's label. This song collection is mostly recorded live and conveys a fresh but honed sound befitting an outfit that's going places. *Rescue Train*, the first single, is a runaway success on rock radio stations.

Based on soulful vocals, quicksilver slide guitar and gospelly keyboards – the essential elements of the southern rock tradition – it has inevitably drawn comparisons to the Allman Brothers Band and modern disciples such as The Black Crowes. Traditionalists will appreciate their cover of *The Weight* and lovelorn ballads *Dark Roses* and *Old Hotel Room*, but the repertoire extends beyond the standard blues-rock menu.

The secret ingredient is Phil Lynott-lookalike Henry James, whose psychedelicised soloing lights up a pair of instrumentals, the proggy *Cannonball* and spaced out *Witchcraft*.

There's enough variety and depth in this material to take Robert Jon & The Wreck from the best bar band around to something a whole lot bigger.

Claudia Elliott

Smith/Kotzen

Better Days... And Nights BMG

Maiden and Mr. Big guitarists stroll down memory lane to blues rock's heyday.

Smith/Kotzen might be something of a busman's holiday for Iron Maiden legend Adrian Smith and Mr. Big/Winery Dogs six-stringer Richie Kotzen, but there's no denying their passion shines through in their blues rock-flavoured side project. Their latest release, a combination of EP *Better Days* and live cuts taken from this year's tour, stylistically throws back to late-60s London before rock got hard and mutated into heavy metal, chucking up shades of Deep Purple (well, more *In Rock* and *Fireball*, but we digress). *Better Days* sees Smith/Kotzen hit their strut early on, but it's in the live renditions of *Got A Hold On Me* and *You Don't Know Me* that the magic is truly captured, their music sounding more vibrant and alive than on record, as the six-string wizardry becomes more pronounced and Kotzen's voice takes on a throaty yarl pitched between David Coverdale and Chris Cornell.

Rich Hobson

Purpendicular

Human Mechanic METALVILLE

A different angle on the real thing.

When it comes to Deep Purple tributes, Purpendicular are pretty much untouchable – not least because Ian Paice sits behind the kit when not at the day job. Delayed by Covid, album number three of original tunes features Paicey and mainman vocalist Robby Walsh, and upholds the spirit and style of Purple while developing the band's own identity. So there's plenty of fiery guitar and Hammond jousting to be enjoyed on *Four Stone Walls*, *The Nothing Box*, *Ghost* and the excellently crunchy *Made Of Steel*, though the over-sincere cheese of *Soul To Soul* is best avoided. Timeless rock'n'roll played with real passion, following a classic blueprint.

Essi Berelian

Nightingales

The Last Laugh TINY GLOBAL

Brum band's latest is an absolute blast.

Oh, it's a riot. It's a rollicking, sardonic, sprawling, cuddly beast of a new album from Birmingham's finest post-punk Elvis Presley fans (the "misfits' misfits", as critic John Robb put it), their ninth or so since reuniting in 2004. A thunderous, welcome riot of drums and brass and vocalist Robert Lloyd's literate sneer, pulsating and pounding across 11 tracks of wry inflection and heartfelt harmony: a little bit country, a whole lot rock'n'roll.

It's a romp from start to finish. Tempting to say that the band and Lloyd have been revitalised by the spurt of minor fame bestowed upon them last year by super-fan, comedian Stewart Lee's touching and very male documentary *King Rocker*, but Nightingales have always sounded this on form.

I (Heart) CCTV lurches belligerently, beautiful bloody single *Bloody Breath* warbles merrily to itself... So good to have the 'Gales back in town.

Everett True

ROUND-UP: BLUES

By Henry Yates

Troy Redfern: travelling at pace creatively.

ADAM KENNEDY/PRESS

Troy Redfern

The Wings Of Salvation

RED7

On his sixth album in two years, Herefordshire's workaholic bandito still has his calling cards: *Navajo* is a Wild West bone shaker and the most prominent use of Redfern's trademark 1935 Dobro resonator.

But if Redfern is prolific then he's not repetitive, tempering the cowboy stylings with other stories, other shades, even other time signatures. A splice of chain gang, sea shanty and funeral parlour organ, *Dark Religion* finds a female runaway bound for promised lands but finding only darkness and despair. *Profane* feels like America at night, on the wrong side of the tracks, its psychobilly scuttle evoking hot rod headlights slicing through the gloom of Gotham City. *Sweet Carolina*, thankfully, is more Bolan-Stones stomp than Neil Diamond syrup, while recent Louder Track Of The Week contender *Come On* is the best here, sharing a little bit of DNA with ZZ Top's *La Grange* and stealing Muddy's pay-off ('*Got my mojo workin'...*'). At this creative pace, you couldn't catch him in a runaway stagecoach.

Durham County Poets

Out Of The Woods

SELF-RELEASED

Roots in all its forms is fair game for Durham County Poets, whose four albums have led them from Quebec coffee houses to something like international contention. Kevin Harvey's conversational vocals are the draw but the band feel deeply, too, ensuring even formula moments (*Mean Old Dog*) land.

Robben Ford & Bill Evans

Common Ground MPS

Double-headers can be cosy, but there's something pleasingly pugnacious about this: try opener *Ever Ready Sunday*, which can't decide if it's heavy blues-rock or jazz in the park on a Sunday. *Hearts Of Havana* is another that feels more like a tussle than a love-in, Ford's evocative and edgy lines never quite giving his partner the run of the track.

Born Healer

Herbs, Roots, Barks Etc

SELF-RELEASED

If the six-year wait since Born Healer's last album implies a reinvention for the British blues-rockers, the truth is more prosaic: they're taking the time to write material that really shouts. *Forgot To Forget* is a charging boogie, *Old Father Time* a busy-drummed cruncher and *Heavy Rumble* a glowering spotlight for Helen Turner's pipes.

Rob Heron & The Tea Pad Orchestra

The Party's Over

TEA PAD RECORDINGS

The Newcastle magpies kick off with *Go Home (The Party's Over)*, Heron listing everything he's poured down his throat like a bloodshot Buddy Holly. Adroitly performed, the bonhomie flows full circle to *The Doctor Told Me*, with Heron informed by his physician that "if I have another drink I'll die".

Joe Lynn Turner

Belly Of The Beast *MUSIC THEORIES/MASCOT*

JLT: better than DLT.

Veteran frontman Joe Lynn Turner has oft been called a journeyman – a description that, we'd argue, is completely misleading. Because out of the numerous bands and artists JLT has sung with – from Malmsteen to Mother Earth, from Rainbow to Rated X – Journey has never been one of them.

…We must admit, we wrote that intro before actually listening to *Belly Of The Beast*, and must now apologise for its jokiness. Nay, facetiousness. Because this is a very serious album indeed, and not only on a musical and lyrical level.

To coincide with its release Turner decided at long last to embrace the fact that he suffers from the hair-loss condition known as alopecia. He consigned his wigs to the waste-bin; his toupées to the trash-can. And, my God, doesn't he look great in the new promo photos? A cross between Richard Fairbrass and Nosferatu, with a hint of Marc Almond thrown in for good measure. Well done, my son.

As for *BOTB* itself, well, it's a far-distant galaxy away from past perceptions. Turner, the soft-hearted smoocher who warbled '*Please be tender*' on Rainbow's *I Surrender*, now occupies a completely different space-time continuum. It's almost as if, to make an incongruous reference to Love/Hate, the album has been recorded by Turner's *Evil Twin*.

Kudos must go to Swedish producer/songwriter Peter Tägtgren (Hypocrisy, Pain, Lindemann) who likely formulated Turner's transformation into a hellspawn vocal powerhouse with tonsils of glasspaper. ("I just kept it dirty, gritty and metal," shrugs Joe in a press release.) Pain's throbbing industrialism is a clear influence, Tägtgren creating a tidal wave of intensity only bettered by the ominous soundtrack of 60s sci-fi TV series *Space Patrol*.

Turner clearly relishes his newfound role as the harbinger of doom and destruction, the songwords out-Priesting Judas Priest in the department marked 'apocalypse'. Try '*Pentagrams of power, dark principalities/We have been devoured, by corruption and disease*' for size. Rob Halford must be quaking in his silver-studded wellies.

Highlights are many. *Black Sun* is bleak, angry, Rammstein-y. *Rise Up* rages against the oppression of humanity by politicians, warlords and suchlike. And *Tears Of Blood*, about Christ's crucifixion, showcases Turner at the top of his game, bellowing the words: '*Give me a kiss like Judas*' and then repeating with a gravelly whisper: '*Give me a kiss…*' Chilling, thrilling, outstanding.

Next month: Joe Lynn Turner features on the cover of *Classic Rock*'s sister mag *Metal Hammer*. Wouldn't *that* be something?

Geoff Barton

Black Lips

Apocalypse Love *FIRE*

Atlanta garage-rockers pack their latest junk-shop jukebox with trashy excess.

Sprawling trash-rock collective Black Lips cover wide musical terrain on their tenth album - a veritable feast of vintage jukebox twang, surreal humour and post-modern pisstake - everything from garage-punk to psych-blues to country-gospel and way beyond. The sloppy saloon-bar honky-tonk vibes that dominated their 2020 collection *Sing In A World That's Falling Apart* are still much in evidence on stand-out tracks like the darkly funny life-swap yarn *Stolen Valor* and *Apocalypse Love* itself, a fuzz-drenched epic that sounds like the Jesus And Mary Chain auditioning for Phil Spector's Christmas album. Meanwhile the band's stylistic swerves are becoming wilder, from the epic doo-wop weepie *Crying On A Plane* to the goofy rap-funk number *Sharing My Cream*, a protest song told from the perspective of a farmyard cow. The Lips are clearly huge fans of the retro-kitsch pop culture that they pillage and parody on this love letter to junkshop Americana.

Stephen Dalton

Devin Townsend

Lightwork *INSIDEOUT*

Melodic bliss from the previously Hevy Devy.

It seems fair to say that Devin Townsend got a lot of stuff out of his system on 2019's overblown and unhinged *Empath*, and last year's cheerfully unfathomable *The Puzzle*. *Lightwork* is those purposefully deranged records' polar opposite: a simple and heartfelt collection of (mainly) straightforward pop-metal songs, all with melodies so large you could stick a flag in them and claim them for the nation of your choosing. There are still moments of epic bombast contained within the blissful likes of *Celestial Signals* and *Call Of The Void*, but *Lightwork* is defined by its lightness of touch and desire to soothe. Even its most experimental moments – the glitchy, AOR-psych of *Heavy Burden*, the dewy-eyed sprawl of *Heartbreaker* – reflect Townsend's delight at the sheer uplifting power of a good tune. Sonically immaculate, as is the Canadian's way, *Lightwork* is a beautiful curveball.

Dom Lawson

Ruby The Hatchet

Fear is A Cruel Master

MAGNETIC EYE RECORDS

Psyche rockers roll back the years…

This fourth studio album comes five years after their third and, like the others, drips with psychedelic doom – the lo-fi sound in no way undermining the impact of a five-piece that makes no secret, in songwriting or dress code, of their love of 70s rock.

An atypically upbeat *The Change* kicks things off, followed by two songs that exude a more proggy, early Maiden-esque feel, *Deceiver* and *Primitive Man* – though, happily, no one could ever mistake singer Jillian Taylor for Paul Di'Anno. *1000 Years* begins as a mellow lament but, as Taylor sings of Hell freezing over, gradually mutates into a fabulous stoner dirge. Equally Sabbathy is Johnny Scarps's riff in *Primitive Man*.

After these the creativity level drops, but there's still fun to be had on *Soothsayer* – begun by a Lake Muir bassline – then rocking to oblivion as heads-down patchouli-scented prime(val) boogie.

Neil Jeffries

Steamhammer

Wailing Again *MIG MUSIC*

Letting off steam.

The return of the Anglo-American prog/psych/blues band Steamhammer is welcome, if unexpected. *Wailing Once Again*, their heavy guitar freak out, references best-known track *Junior's Wailing* (a Status Quo staple), and the debt they owe to Freddie King. Guitarist Martin Pugh was a Worthing hippy soul boy who played on Rod Stewart's solo debut, while the other name here is bass player Pete Sears, a devotee of all things West Coast (he was in Jefferson Starship for his sins). The best numbers are retreads of old material associated with original member Kieran White, namely *I Wouldn't Have Thought* from the *Mountains* album

AGATA NIGROVSKAYA/PRESS

(1970). Recorded remotely with drummer John Lingwood in England and the other three, including singer Phil Colombatto, in California the results are slick but slightly tepid, though they add plenty of crunch to Eddie Boyd's old Chess hit, *24 Hours*.

Max Bell

King Gizzard & The Lizard Wizard

Ice, Death, Planets, Lungs, Mushrooms And Lava / Laminated Denim / Changes KGLW

Three is the magic number for the tireless Aussie psych crew.

You have to wonder if KG&TLW ever just sit down for a nice cup of tea and a Tim Tam, given that they seem to release a new album every half an hour. This month it's three records at once, each with a different flavour.

Ice, Death, Planets, Lungs, Mushrooms And Lava (**7/10**) is the result of one mammoth jam session, although opener *Mycelium* is so kids-TV/Vampire Weekend jaunty it's clear that this is a way more fun prospect than it seems. On *Laminated Denim* (**6/10**) they revisit a previous concept, with one 15-minute track on each side intended as intermission music for a live show, floating along on a wave of jazzy good vibes. Finally, *Changes* (**6/10**), which according to main man Stu Mackenzie is a "song cycle" all built around one chord progression on a tiny practice keyboard. The result borders on easy listening with a yacht-pop vibe, before the psychedelic starbursts come out to play.

Emma Johnston

Biffy Clyro

A Celebration Of Endings (Live From The Barrowland Ballroom) WARNERS

Limited edition audio and Blu-ray documenting one-off gig.

Kilmarnock's Biffy Clyro released *A Celebration Of Endings* in 2020 and while the album went to No.1, Covid precluded them from touring it – hence this one-off Glasgow gig, recorded minus an audience. It's elegantly staged, featuring strings, mannequins and a glass enclosure from which they perform a couple of numbers, with a constant miasma of dry ice. It's caught in a singular realm between video and gig but, especially between numbers, the atmosphere drops to that of a soundcheck.

Musically, on *Worst Kind Of Best Possible* and *The Champ*, Biffy Clyro offer a trade-off between intriguing changes and passages of beauty, reminiscent of fellow Scots AC Acoustics, and choruses that crash with obvious inevitability, but help account for their popularity. It's a bold venture but a limited edition of 3,000 feels right.

David Stubbs

Wednesday 13

Horrifier NAPALM

The Duke of Spook offers up a mixed bag of tired tricks and treats in time for Halloween.

Twenty years since emerging as the gravel throated frontman of Murderdolls, Wednesday 13 has long since dropped the B-movie shlock of his early releases that made him the heir apparent to the horror-punk throne. Nonetheless, nestled amid the heavy metal riffs and creepy vibes of *Horrifier* is a sense of ghoulish glee that shines through on *Insides Out*, *You're So Hideous* and *Good Day To Be A Bad Guy*, the former powered by a riff that could fit snugly in 90s death metal, while *Hideous* and *Bad Guy* boast snarl-along choruses. *Horrifier*'s biggest setback is when Wednesday plays things a little too straight; without the B-movie camp, songs like *Return To Haddonfield* and *Exhume And Devour* become joyless offal served up alongside otherwise prime cuts of horror-punk brilliance.

Rich Hobson

Brian Eno

ForeverAndEverNoMore UMC

Ambient godfather makes rare vocal album full of warm emotion and apocalyptic angst.

Voice maturing like fine cheese, the veteran egghead professor of conceptual art-pop shows off his crooning skills for the first time in 17 years on his latest solo album. As the title suggests, *ForeverAndEverNoMore* finds the 74-year-old Eno musing on final things, chiefly the potential end of humankind due to climate catastrophe, while attempting to harness music's full-blooded emotional power to help avert disaster. *There Were Bells* and *Garden Of Stars* are vintage late-period Eno, lush electro-pastoral hymnals layered with birdsong, breathy sighs and Gregorian chant-like vocals.

Perhaps the most surprising highlights here are some of the most conventionally song-like solo pieces Eno has ever produced: *Sherry* is a wistful, jazzy ballad threaded with luminous Floydian guitar lines and *These Small Noises* a gorgeous late-night lullaby of electric piano ripples and cooing female voices. A shimmering miasma of glitchy textures and Auto-Tuned vocalese, the album's largely instrumental finale *Making Gardens Out Of Silence* could almost be a 21st-century update of those seminal ambient sound paintings on Bowie's "*Heroes*", which is a pretty high bar. Behind all the autumnal rumination and elder-statesmen tastefulness, thankfully, Eno's experimental ethos endures.

Stephen Dalton

Newtown Neurotics

Cognitive Dissidents CADIZ

Harlow perennials battle on against the odds.

Steve Drewett's voice may betray his advanced years on these Essex punk veterans' latest set, but a potent songwriting flame still flickers on some of these agit-pop broadsides. "Broad" is in fact the operative word – any temptation to couch meanings in poetic metaphor is consistently swerved on Ronseal-style titles such as *Climate Emergency* and *Hell In A Handcart*. '*The architect built a socialist dream, and then the Tories underfunded it, undermined its central dream,*' sings Drewett on *Take Your Dirty Hands Off My Town* sounding more like a point of order at a council meeting than a song lyric.

All the same, ebullient hooks, buzzing guitar riffs and the sheer conviction of Drewett's delivery keep us engaged.

Johnny Sharp

BEST OF THE REST

Other new releases out this month.

Andy McCoy

Jukebox Junkie CLEOPATRA

Though hardly blessed with the most sonorous singing voice, the Hanoi Rocks guitarist offsets limitations with outlaw swagger on this set of guest-vocalist-enhanced covers. Unlikely highlight? A sleazing remodel of Squeeze's *Take Me I'm Yours*. **7/10**

Gogol Bordello

Solidartine CASA GOGOL/COOKING VINYL

Informed by war in frontman Eugene Hütz's native Ukraine, *Solidartine* is a hope-filled cri de coeur, a post-Covid punk rock fiesta in the face of adversity. Its stirring spirit may call to mind Clash, Levellers, DKs even, but it's sometimes a little too knees-up for its own good. **7/10**

Off!

Free LSD FAT POSSUM

Ex-Black Flag/Circle Jerks foghorn Keith Morris fronts a revitalised Off! (now with added Thundercat bassist Justin Brown and ...Trail Of Dead drummer Autry Fulbright). At first you think, "Meh, more generic LA stuntcore." Then realise you're loving it. Not broke, not fixed. **8/10**

Sweet Teeth

High Anxiety LÖVELY

Perky Swedish alt.rock with a Dino Jr backwash and soft-focus Hüsker Dü undertones, *High Anxiety* irresistibly reeks of innumerable early-90s also-rans with names like Midway Still and Walk Mink. Not to say it's bad, just familiar. That said, what isn't? Must try harder. **6/10**

New Roses

Sweet Poison NAPALM

It's clear that Germany's New Roses put their backs into recreating a wholemeal, organic, axe-flaying, throat-shredding old school rock you'd expect of Saxon with a sleeves-rolled-up tool-belted JBJ at the mic, but it's also clear that their singer's called Timmy Rough. **7/10**

Luke Haines And Peter Buck

All The Kids Are Super Bummed CHERRY RED

Following an unlikely online hook-up, ever-engaging Auteur-in chief Haynes provides witty/wordy, politically-piqued lyrics (in a voice recalling TV Smith) as REM's Buck adds spiked guitars and psyched keys. A bunker-born double (their second) that keeps on giving. **8/10**

Danny Goffey

Brian Moone's DiscoPunk DISTILLER

Laced with the easy, ear-catching, adolescent exuberance of peak Supergrass, for whom Goffey remains drummer, this electrofied pop-punk confection of observational anecdotes and barbed hooks is as rooted in an idealised '78 as anything by Lawrence Hayward. **7/10**

Special Interest

Endure ROUGH TRADE

Funk-charged electro beats and edgy Jean-Jacques bass drive the third dancefloor inferno from the New Orleans no-wavers. Mykki Blanco pops up on *Midnight Legend*, but the highlights break out elsewhere when Alli Logout furiously punks the shit out of post-disco. **8/10**

Telefís

a Dó DIMPLE DISCS

The last from Cathal Coughlan, in tandem with ex-Compulsion super-producer Garret Lee, melds lyrically mischievous melancholia, driving electronica and a mellifluous vocal fluidity. Sean O'Hagan, A Certain Ratio, Will Sergeant and Jah Wobble guest. A fine testament. **8/10**

Goodnight Sunrise

Against All Odds SELF-RELEASED

With time's passage fine lines between rock and C21 pop steadily blur toward invisibility. These dual-vocalist Canadians alt. it with requisite guitar acrobatics ahoy, but their hooks, nagging choruses and Vanessa Vakharia's emotive catnip keening are purest chart fodder. **7/10**

A Void

Dissociation MOLD CULTURE

Thought the grunge era had given its best already? Think again. Hole-channelling London/Paris trio A Void and most especially their exceptional guitar/vocal/charisma bomb Camille Alexander blend Sonic Youth, Björk and Nirvana to engaging effect. Raw, pure, irresistible. **8/10**

BEST OF THE REST REVIEWS BY IAN FORTNAM

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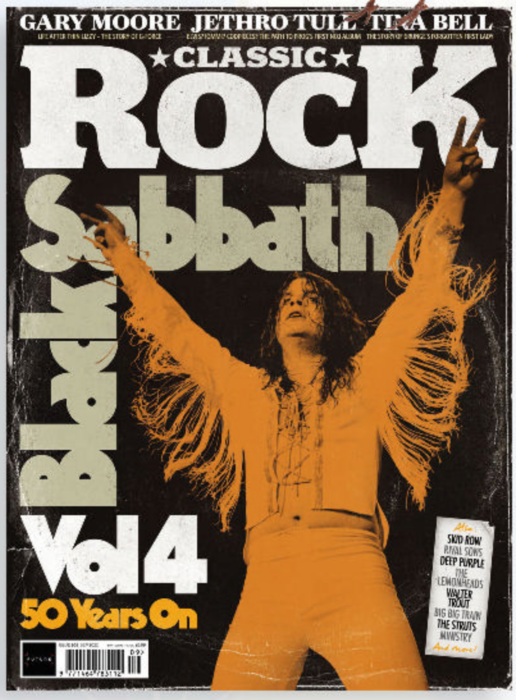

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THE HARD STUFF REISSUES

Motörhead

Iron Fist (40th Anniv. Edition) SANCTUARY

The Three Amigos' farewell, sumptuously repackaged with added demos and live set.

For all of their longevity, Motörhead's reputation as the loudest, fastest and most exhilarating band of their ilk was forged back in the late 70s and early 80s by the classic line-up of singer/bassist Lemmy Kilminster, guitarist 'Fast' Eddie Clarke and drummer Phil 'Philthy Animal' Taylor. Forget the high-street T-shirts that reduced the band to a brand, this was the trio that elevated heavy metal to an entirely new level of excitement, thanks to a run of utterly demented albums that included *Overkill*, *Bomber* (both 1979), 1980's *Ace Of Spades* and the chart-topping live album *No Sleep 'Till Hammersmith* from the following year. And that's before we consider their ram-raiding of the UK Top 10 singles chart in the shape of *The Golden Years* and the *St. Valentine's Day Massacre* EPs, the latter of which saw them teaming up with Girlschool.

Iron Fist, the final album from the celebrated Three Amigos line-up, is one that seems to have fallen down the cracks of Motörhead's history. With Lemmy expressing his dissatisfaction with guitarist Eddie Clarke's production, following previous album *Bomber* producer Vic Maile's departure from the band's sphere, it's easy to see how his influence may have tarnished the album's reputation. And while there may be some extra gloss to Motörhead's sound here, this fortieth-anniversary edition shows that some historical re-appraisal is certainly in order.

Right from the off with the title track, Motörhead lay down the law with the dynamic that was uniquely theirs: Lemmy blasting out distorted chords on his overdriven bass guitar, Eddie Clarke's high-velocity guitar and Phil Taylor supplying extra low-end heft with his two bass drums. Elsewhere, Lemmy's lyrics are on point, especially on the righteous howl that is *Don't Need Religion* and the self-aware *America*. With the tracks clocking in at around the three-minute mark if not less, *Iron Fist* is an album that doesn't outstay its welcome.

What makes this reissue particularly desirable is the addition of a warts-'n'-all live set recorded at Glasgow Apollo in March 1982. This is Motörhead in full flight – a breathless gallop through *Iron Fist*'s highlights and glorious dips into the material that preceded it. The pace is frenetic throughout, and by the time they reach the climactic triple whammy of *Overkill*, *Motörhead* and *Bomber* it feels as if they could derail at any moment. They would soon after, but certainly not here, making it a fitting requiem.

Julian Marszalek

Status Quo

Reissues UMC

Flawed attempts to recreate old glories.

After a series of little-loved albums, often heavily reliant on covers, the new century saw the formerly mighty Quo (by then Rossi, Parfitt, Bown, Edwards and new drummer Matt Letley) poised to claw back some credibility by inviting their former road manager/harmonica player/co-writer Bob Young to return. Young contributed to seven rockin' numbers on 2002's *Heavy Traffic* (**5/10**), *All Stand Up* and the title track being the best, but once more it relied on outsiders for its hit *Jam Side Down*. More tellingly, Parfitt co-wrote only one song among the other five, and the sum total didn't (and still won't) excite many fans of the band's stellar 70s output. This re-release adds 24 bonus tracks: six B-sides and demos, plus a so-so live set from Switzerland's Heitere Festival in August 2003.

There are 16 similar bonuses for that year's *Riffs* (**2/10**) – here boosted by a far superior live set recorded in Montreux in July 2004 – but in the studio Quo had inexplicably reverted to covers; Kinks, Elvis Costello and ELO fans look away! The retread of the Nashville Teens' *Tobacco Road* is decent, but remaking five of their own classics was pointless. Still, Quo's take on *Born To Be Wild* is so off-kilter that it's hilarious.

For completists only.

Neil Jeffries

Various

Bound For Hell – On The Sunset Strip NUMERO GROUP

Sprawling re-examination of Hollywood glam.

Nothing's obscure any more; weirdo Christian acid-folk records from Iowa, originally pressed by some dude's uncle in 1971, get 180-gram gatefold reissues these days. It's pretty spectacular. But there are still dark corners of rock'n'roll left dusty and unloved, and Sunset Strip glam-metal is one of them.

It will undoubtedly be painful for some to hear, but that's largely because that particular form of popular music has aged about as well as warm milk. If you haven't heard the Bullet Boys in a while, well, that's probably for a good reason. But before all the cheeseball power ballads and hair-to-the-sky histrionics, there was a pretty remarkable scene full of scrappy hard rock bands sowing the seeds of fame and fortune for the lucky few.

Bound For Hell is about the unlucky ones, and it's a killer. This flaming-red two-disc set shines a light on these starry-eyed pioneers, from second-tier hopefuls like the almost-metal Black N' Blue, chest-plated warriors Armored Saint and untamed screechers Lizzy Borden, but also features tantalising never-weres like Sin, whose furious *On The Run* is primo 80s shred, and Odin, famous for being idiots in *The Decline Of Western Civilization Part II: The Metal Years*, who do, in fact, deliver dumb proto-power metal fun. This collection's sumptuous supplementary material, including a frankly gorgeous 144-page book and a bootleg-style bonus cassette, fleshes out the story and spotlights both the incestuous nature of Hollywood glam, and the importance of female-led participants like Bitch and Hellion. If you've ever considered fishnets a fashion necessity, then you probably need this.

Sleazegrinder

Crazy Horse

Crazy Moon FLOATING WORLD

Their second finest hour.

Neil Young's good old boys are famous for giving him a sonic wall of noise, all the better to embellish with his maniacal melodies, *After The Gold Rush* being the choicest example. When his foils were left to their own devices they were hit-and-miss, but *Crazy Moon* was their best record after their '71 debut *Crazy Horse*.

Recorded in 1975/6 during downtime from Young's *Zuma* sessions, *Crazy Moon* showcased guitarist Frank 'Poncho' Sampedro, a newcomer to the band who some thought would usurp the loyal Billy Talbot and Ralph Molina rhythm section. In fact his contributions were house-styled with the country topping of Ben Keith's pedal steel and the East LA Horns signifying a coda to the West Coast sound before Young realised it was time to rip up that flagging rule book. Lyrically it feels a bit phoned-in at the

ALLAN BALLARD/PRESS

last minute; no Pulitzer Prize for the clunky *She's Hot* or the sub-Eagles *Love Don't Come Easy*. Drummer Molina's *End Of The Line* is better, thanks to guitarist Jay Graydon's session-man skills and Barry Goldberg's keyboard nous. Young features a lot without upstaging his mates, saving his best for the finale, *Thunder And Lightning*, where typically punchy Horse vocal harmonies provide an adequate send-off.

Max Bell

Dexys Midnight Runners

Too-Rye-Ay, As It Could Have Sounded UMC/MERCURY

Remixed three-disc expansion of Celtic soul chartbuster.

Can't see past the dungarees? Kevin Rowland has never made it particularly easy for knee-jerk detractors to look beyond what many regularly misdiagnose as style-over-substance. And yes, *Geno* donkey jackets, *Don't Stand Me Down* suits and *My Beauty* drag do have a distinct tendency to hint at a capricious fashion victim's vacuity, but in light of Dexys' actual recordings, Rowland's instinctive pop genius effectively drowns out any such misgivings.

Too-Rye-Ay, Dexys' second incarnation, as oft recounted pop history tells us, had Rowland tapping into Irish roots to invent Celtic soul. Much as Van Morrison already had with *Astral Weeks*. But let's not get into that. Following hot on the heels of its irresistible lead single *Come On Eileen*, the album was unavoidable in the summer of '82 but, according to perfectionist Kev, it could have been better. And now, with an after-the-fact director's cut remix, it actually is.

The new mix adds revelatory sparkle and serves to accentuate the tracks that, due to the fact they didn't entirely support the band's core Celtic Soul Brothers theme, were slightly overlooked and undervalued on release: *Plan B*, *Liars A To E* and the abiding jewel in Rowland's songwriting crown, *Old*. Which is, quite simply, impeccable.

Disc two in this triple-CD expansion documents Dexy's great 'lost' period (the transitional period between …*Young Soul Rebels* and *Too-Rye-Ay*), typified by the explosive *Show Me* single alongside B-sides and significant out-takes, while disc three captures the band live, projecting pure passion and raw, emotive incendiary soul at London's Shaftesbury Theatre.

Breathtaking stuff.

Ian Fortnam

Jesse Malin

Glitter In The Gutter

WICKED COOL

Expanded and remastered previously 'lost' Malin gem.

It's a mystery – although probably bogged down in cold economics – why Jesse Malin's glorious third album had been lost to the sands of time. Recorded in LA in 2007, after Malin was pushed out of his apartment in New York, it was my first experience of the singer/songwriter, and so impressive was his mix of rock'n'roll and down at heel ballads that we invited him on to BBC 6Music as a guest. To his credit, he seemed bemused to be there.

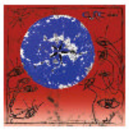
Nothing's changed my wonderment at this bristling collection. The reworked and updated duet with Bruce Springsteen on *Broken Radio '22*, a lament for Malin's mother's life of missed opportunities, is still sublime and elegiac. The heart-breaking *Aftermath* shares a similar regretful energy. *In The Modern World* is reckless and punchy, while the reworked cover of The Replacements' *Bastards Of The Young* is distilled to a piano part, aching with want.

Philip Wilding

The Cure

Wish UMC/FICTION/POLYDOR

The Cure's 'light' early-90s album gets shrouded in characteristic darkness.



As relatively 'light relief' after the claustrophobic glower of 1989's *Disintegration*, 1992's *Wish*, The Cure's ninth studio album, has long needed a brightening remaster to remove the layer of dun production dulling the gleam of *High*, *Letter To Elise* and *Friday I'm In Love*. On this 30th-anniversary reissue even *Open*, the panic attack at an after-show that opens the record, seems sharper and lighter, and the polish helps lift subdued classics like *Trust* and *To Wish Impossible Things* out of the murk.

Thanks to gothic firestorms like *From The Edge Of The Deep Green Sea*, *Wish* was always a darker proposition than its marquee tunes suggested, and the album's worth of additional demos included on this three-CD package highlight its natural progression from *Disintegration*. Drenched in misty synths and witchy backing vocals, *The Big Hand* – the only fully completed song here that didn't make the finished album – is rooted in The Cure's graveyard period around the *Faith* and *Pornography* albums, and *Heart Attack* throws back to their post-punk vivacity, while instrumentals like *This Twilight Garden*, *Scared As You* and *Now Is The Time* loop the more groove-laden beats of the day around trademark lustrous Cure atmospherics. *Swing Change* indulges in junk-shop hula, and *T6* and the sax-heavy *Frogfish* suggests a sludgy funk route The Cure thankfully wouldn't take, but otherwise these are off-cuts to sink into.

Mark Beaumont

David Bowie

Moonage Daydream – Music From The Film OST PARLOPHONE

Valuable treasures from Davy Jones's locker.

HERB RITTS/PRESS

If it's axiomatic that great artistic careers build to a form of crescendo, then this two-CD set, the official soundtrack to Brett Morgen's anticipated documentary on the musical odyssey of David Bowie, meets that criterion. Morgen's work on *Crossfire Hurricane* for the Rolling Stones and *Kurt Cobain: Montage Of Heck* persuaded Bowie's estate to give him carte blanche with more than 50 years of material, utilising sonic enhancement, mixes that veer from the sublime to the ridiculously sublime, and a spoken-word narrative of sorts that threads the meaning of time, death and faith.

From the moment Bowie's philosophically framed question: "All is transient. Does it matter? Do I bother?" begins the journey, the listener is bound to look for meaning in every lyric. No more so than during an early version of *Hunky Dory*'s *Quicksand*, a song that used to seem youthfully morbid but now has a large side order of entropy in the line: *'I'm not a prophet or a Stone Age man/Just a mortal with potential for a superman.'* This is where the man who sold the world has to collect on his debts. And for those who have followed, there's a lot to chase down, whether that's the questioning hippie in *Wild Eyed Boy From Freecloud* and *Cygnet Committee*, or the avant-garde futurist who raised his game on *Warszawa*, *V-2 Schneider* and the beatific Japanese-inspired *Moss Garden*.

Bowie fans of all ages will find themselves occupied. The chosen ones who swore allegiance to the Ziggy-era, once characterised by photographer Mick Rock as "blood and glitter", can swoon again to the Hammersmith Odeon concert in 1973 when Bowie committed his rock'n'roll suicide while the Spiders From Mars freaked out in the far-out *Moonage Daydream*, before Jeff Beck locked horns with Mick Ronson and co. on the *The Jean Genie/Love Me Do* encore that proved to be a calm before the storm of the increasingly drug-addled *Aladdin Sane* and *Diamond Dogs*, where Bowie channelled his inner Lou Reed and made that seem like utter nihilism. Some may feel the vocal tampering on *Life On Mars?* is unnecessary. And two versions of *Hallo Spaceboy*? It ends with Bowie refraining Peter Cook and Dudley Moore's *Goodbye-ee*.

The stars look very different today.

Max Bell

Sweet

Greatest Hitz: The Best Of Sweet 1969-1978 *BMG*

Sweet… and sour.

Not to nitpick, but surely the title should be Greatezt Hitz? Attention to detail is important, as this writer discovered while on the road with Sweet in Germany in the mid-70s. Frontman Brian Connolly's white satin bell bottoms arrived back from the dry-cleaner draped over a crude metal clothes hanger, creating impossible-to-remove creases in the kneecap area. Connolly was apoplectic with rage, and rightly so. It was a proper rock'n'roll disgrace.

Attention to detail is also important while researching Sweet's back catalogue in order to put together this compilation of past glitter-cheeked glories. But first things first. *Greatest Hitz* is available in two formats: three-CD digisleeve, and two-LP transparent coloured vinyl with, bizarrely, one disc being violet and one pink. The CD package is the one you want because it contains tons more tracks. Yet they are not ordered chronologically, so one can be listening to the storming *Set Me Free* one minute and the throwaway *Lollipop Man* the next. Presumably the idea is to accentuate the difference between the 'bubblegum' Sweet, as mentored by hitmakers Nicky Chinn and Mike Chapman, and the 'rockist' direction the band favoured and which ultimately held sway.

(As an aside, one cannot help but feel that ChinniChap were messing with adolescent minds back in the day. Alright, we're not exactly talking backwards satanic messages, but burning questions remain. Such as why wouldn't Little Willy go home? Why did Poppa Joe render people unconscious with his coconut rum? Were those goings-on inside the wigwam as steamy as one suspects?)

Anyhow, back to attention to detail. The sleeve-notes, by *Classic Rock*'s Dave Ling, rightly acclaim Sweet, once they had shrugged off their teenybop shackles, as one of the finest heavy rock bands Britain has produced, up there rubbing star-spangled shoulders with the likes of UFO and Thin Lizzy. (Note that Sweet were also ripped off by Queen in the falsetto-harmony department.) Yet the two loudest and proudest songs the band ever recorded – the snarling *Cockroach*, from 1976 album *Give Us A Wink*, and *Windy City*, an angsty anthem about Chicago that appeared on 1977's *Off The Record* – are glaringly absent. Of course one can always quibble with track choices, but the inclusions of the decidedly dodgy *Funk It Up* (also from *Off The Record*), *My Generation* (Who cover) and the breathless but pointless *Peppermint Twist* are frankly incomprehensible. Still, at least we're spared a Mick Tucker drum solo.

■■■■■■■□□□

Geoff Barton

Demolition 23.

Demolition 23. *WICKED COOL*

Michael Monroe's early-90s punk wrecking crew.

Rated by Michael Monroe as one of his career favourites, 1994's *Demolition 23.* album is something of a lost gem. Written in two weeks by Monroe, Jude Wilder and Stevie Van Zandt and produced in two weeks by the latter, the album was intended to capture the original punk sound of bands like the Pistols, Clash and Dead Boys, and it does so with no small amount of style and energy.

With a line up including Monroe's fellow Hanoi mate Sami Yaffa on bass and ex-Star Star guitarist Jay Hening, the blazing firepower of snotty rockers like *Same Shit Different Day*, *Nothin's Alright* and *Dysfunctional* is a joy to behold. Throw in covers of Dead Boys' *Ain't Nothin' To Do*, Johnny Thunders' *I Wanna Be Loved* and UK Subs' *Endangered Species*, and *Demolition 23* works like a bondage-trousered, safety-pin encrusted charm. The reissue includes bonus demos of *Hammersmith Palais*, *Dysfunctional* and *The Scum Lives On*.

Which is all well and good, but the real value lies in having the record readily available again. Albums that are shamelessly derivative often end up missing the artistic mark by a very wide margin, but the level of love for the music and determination shown by Monroe and Van Zandt to harness the spirit of '77 means that *Demolition 23.* really does capture classic punk lightning in a bottle. With the obvious top-notch chemistry demonstrated by the band and the no-frills, all-thrills songwriting, it's a shame there wasn't a follow-up.

■■■■■■■■□□

Essi Berelian

Senseless Things

The First Of Too Many *CHERRY RED*

Underrated second-gen UK pop-punk.

By the time pop punk 'broke' in 1994 off the back of grunge with the hip SoCal sounds of Green Day, Offspring, Rancid, NOFX and Bad Religion all scoring big, the UK scene had already been and gone. More's the pity that Senseless Things – along with fellow late-80s/early-90s bands like Mega City Four and Snuff – never got a taste of the real success they deserved, despite influencing the likes of Ash and Supergrass.

Building on the frantic grebo punk of 1989 debut *Postcard CV* – the melodic harmonies of Ramones, Dickies and Buzzcocks filtered through 80s indie rock – 1991's *The First Of Too Many* featured a fuller and more polished mature sound but lost the raw urgency of their early material. A relentless touring band, Ver Things built up a loyal fan base, and with its sleeve by Tank Girl artist Jamie Hewlett (who would later find his own animated chart success with Gorillaz), their first album for Epic should have catapulted them into the mainstream. But, lost in the cacophony of grunge du jour, it peaked at No.66. It wouldn't be until album number three, *Empire Of The Senseless*, that they nudged inside the Top 40. This three-CD/double-vinyl expanded edition includes the original album, and a live album from 1991.

■■■■■■□□□□

Alex Burrows

Sodom

40 Years At War – The Greatest Hell Of Sodom *SPV*

German legends' gnarliest deep cuts, re-made.

When it comes to myopic, diehard heavy metal evangelism, few can compete with Sodom. After four decades of being thrash's most gnarly figureheads, the German band haven't come close to running out of steam, and this collection of retrospective re-records is as brutal and bruising as anything in their catalogue.

The novelty here is that Sodom have picked one song from each of their 16 studio albums, and given them all a robust upgrade, albeit retaining the originals' arrangements to the deafening letter. As a result, *40 Years At War* is more an exercise in unearthing overlooked gems than a greatest-hits set. Pleasingly, the primitive likes of *Sepulchral Voice* (originally from cult debut *In The Sign Of Evil*) and *After The Deluge* (from the German version of 1986's *Obsessed By Cruelty*) fit perfectly with rough-cut 90s picks like

GETTY

the amusingly knuckleheaded *Jabba The Hut* and the death metal-like *Body Parts*.

Above all, Sodom continue to attack everything they play with levels of eye-popping vehemence that put many of their peers, old and new, to shame. '*Authorised to kill, fuming with rage!*' the apparently ageless Tom Angelripper screams at the beginning of *Electrocution*. Fair enough, mate.

Dom Lawson

Various

Revenge Of The She-Punks

TAPETE

Gender, not genre.

Okay, but really… who cares? That's not what this album is setting out to do. This is document and eyewitness, a brilliantly curated collection of female and other-gendered voices in an otherwise male-dominated world. The range of styles and absolute brilliance of the practitioners is astonishing only if you were too blinkered by hegemonic dictates to miss it first time around. For true punks this is both affirmation and celebration; a tale of complex survival in hostile environments.

The collection is inspired by Vivien Goldman's inspirational alternative history of the same name, and the music critic/artist supplies sleeve-notes, a running commentary split into four sections: Identity, Money, Love (UnLove) and Protest.

Into the first section fall pioneers X-Ray Spex (obviously) and Raincoats' (a band who, uniquely, were loved by both Rotten and Cobain) beautiful discordant harmony, Blondie's still underrated punk snarl, present-day flag bearers Big Joanie. Into Money we have Patti Smith, Shonen Knife on the very top of their game, The Slits' life-changing, reggae-inspired groove (and Vivien herself, with the mighty *Launderette* single). And so forth. Not one weak track, and often the band's finest track (Sleater-Kinney's irresistible *Little Babies*, Poison Girls' chilling *Persons Unknown*, the Au Pairs' thoroughly woke *It's Obvious*, The Selecter, The Mo-dettes' cult favourite *White Mice*, today's Riot Grrrl champions Skinny Girl Diet… (Wot, no Snoozers?)

Twenty-eight tracks of pure energy, inspiration, challenge, identity and dance fever. Near transcendentally wonderful.

Everett True

Diamond Head

Lightning To The Nations (The White Album: Remastered 2021)

SILVER LINING MUSIC

Remastered classic, bonus tracks and 'lost' tapes.

Can it really be just two scant years since Diamond Head attempted to rework this NWOBHM gem with their current line-up and then threw their cover of Metallica's *No Remorse* into the mix? It was an album that was both odd and unsettling. Happily, this reissue celebrates a record built on Sean Harris's snake-hip shake and Plant-friendly vocals and Brian Tatler's earth-shaker riffs.

Listening to it now, it's little wonder how excited we all got 40-something years ago when this hairy, baby-faced mob came blinking into the light. Songs and attitude for days, hardly a sophisticated production, but there was so much raw promise on that record. This time around we also get the so-called 'lost' tapes, the original mixes of five songs from the record that had been lost to the ages (or an ex-manager) that still have the grit and charm of that first record. More exciting still are the bonus tracks from that era, not least *Waited Too Long*, *Shoot Out The Lights* and *Streets Of Gold*, proof, if it were needed, of a band oozing with creativity. What, you wonder, would history have made of Diamond Head if a Mutt Lange – or similar – had got a hold of them?

Philip Wilding

Bert Jansch

Bert At The BBC EARTH

A boundless bounty of a folk-rock legend.

The vast sweep of Bert Jansch's career was reflected in his substantial output for the BBC, beginning with a 1966 spot on the Light Programme (which later became Radio 2) and ending at Glastonbury in July 2011, just three months before his death. Most of it is collected here, spanning eight CDs of radio sessions and live broadcasts, diligently researched and compiled by Jansch biographer Colin Harper.

Even the paucity of stuff from his 70s Charisma Records years doesn't detract from the riches on display, with Disc One packing in songs that helped turn him (after early role model Davy Graham) into folk's first great guitar hero: *Running From Home*; a desolate *I Am Lonely*; Pentangle's fabulous rework of *Reynardine*. Others are at hand at various points too – double-bass player Danny Thompson and singer Mary Hopkin at 1977's Cambridge Folk Festival; duo pieces with guitarists John Renbourn, Rod Clements and Ralph McTell; Johnny Marr and Bernard Butler on *Later…With Jools Holland* – but Jansch's tinder-dry voice and sinuous, voyaging guitar playing remain very much front and centre. A pair of riveting live shows – a 60th birthday bash from 2003 and the following year's homecoming gig at Edinburgh Queen's Hall for Radio Scotland – prove that Jansch's supreme talent was resistant to time.

Rob Hughes

The Libertines

Up The Bracket ROUGH TRADE

Lavishly expanded 20th-anniversary edition of the band's first album.

GREG SARGENT/PRESS

Twenty tumultuous years after their debut album, it's still not entirely clear whether The Libertines were the first great British rock band of the 21st century, heroically carrying the torch held by rebels from Lord Byron to Joe Strummer with hedonistic panache, or a bunch of chancers.

They've certainly gone the whole hog here. There's a Deluxe version that adds a 2002 concert at the 100 Club to the remastered original. There's a Super Deluxe box that adds previously unreleased demos, B-sides, out-takes, further live recordings and radio sessions. Throw in a cassette and a couple of seven-inch singles, and 11 shortish, sharpish songs have exploded into an 85-headed beast. There's also a book and a DVD. Of course there is.

Kate Moss and Kirsty Wark making fools of themselves and Pete Doherty's incarceration were in the future, and everything outside the actual music (Doherty's somewhat wayward lifestyle; the incessant harping on about 'Albion') was very much of its time.

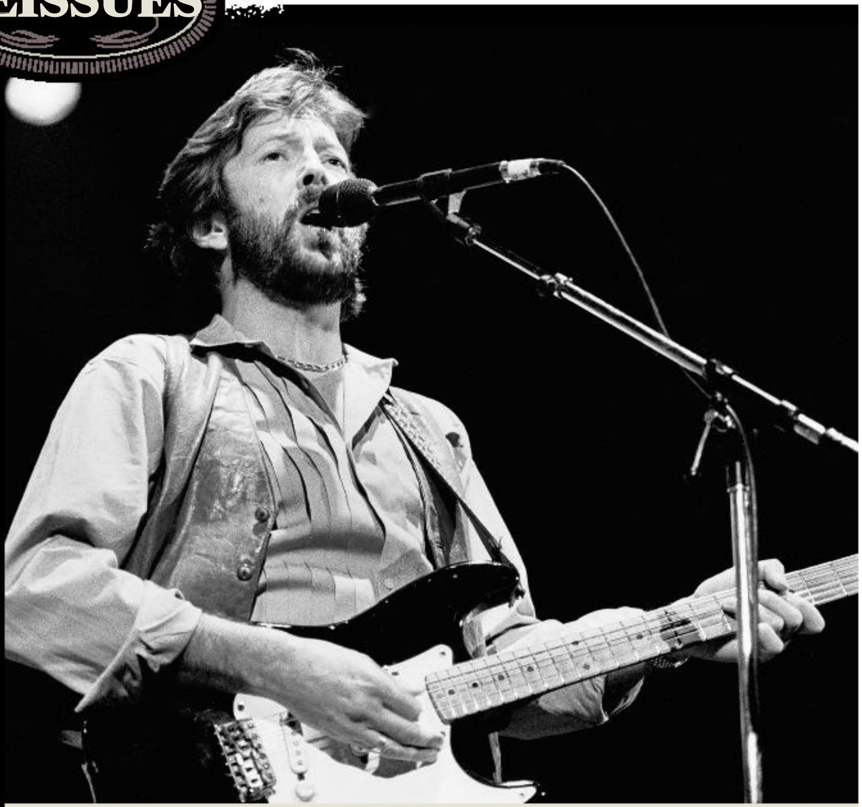
Yet for all the comparisons to The Strokes and The Kinks, the music is timeless; *Times For Heroes* and *The Good Old Days* in particular are as much 1972 as 2002, and Doherty and Carl Barat were the real songwriting deal. *Up The Bracket* is a terrific album. That it's no longer surrounded by tabloid hullaballoo makes it better still.

Is the expansion worth the effort, though? For the most part, yes, although releasing demos of an album that already sounded quite demo-ish does not make for anything especially eyebrow-raising, other than illustrating how producer Mick Jones (The Clash not Foreigner, sadly) brought new rigour and vigour to standouts *I Get Along* and *Vertigo*.

The band are tight on the pristine live show, and while it's short on chat it thrills. The studio out-takes show that the song pool hadn't been fully drained. *Breck Road Lover* and *The Domestic* could have graced the album, and the version of *The Ha Ha Wall* knocks the one that made it on to album number two into whatever a cocked hat is.

The 85 tracks could have been trimmed, but that's not really the point. This biggest of pictures is a reminder that when you cancel the extra-curricular noise The Libertines were great.

John Aizlewood



Eric Clapton

The Complete Reprise Studio Albums Vol 1 WARNERS

Slowhand getting back in the swing.

By the beginning of the 80s, Eric Clapton had become an indolent rock star. Cocooned in alcohol, his career was drifting along, with increasing disinterest on all sides. His life was basically catered for – right down to having somebody else take his driving test for him.

On stage, however, he could still play guitar, even when he couldn't stand up, something he proved occasionally. But even that was preferable to the drunken on-stage racist rant that helped the foundation of Rock Against Racism.

In 1983, Clapton got sober and switched labels to Reprise. That year's *Money And Cigarettes* (**5/10**) reunited him with producer Tom Dowd, who brought in heavyweight American musicians including Ry Cooder to help Clapton raise his game. He even scored a moderate hit with the gentle, rolling *I've Got A Rock 'N' Roll Heart*. But Clapton didn't have the originals to back up the covers.

Next he teamed up with his new best friend Phil Collins to co-produce *Behind The Sun* (**6/10**). But powerful blues rockers like *She's Waiting* and *Same Old Blues* were not enough for Reprise, who flew in producer Ted Templeman to sprinkle his 80s fairy dust over *Forever Man* and give Clapton a proper hit.

August (**7/10**), in 1986, cemented Clapton's comeback with a variety of hits including *It's In The Way That You Use It* and *Tearing Us Apart*, a feisty duet with Tina Turner. There was also the stirring, emotional *Holy Mother*. Bassist Nathan East and keyboard player Greg Phillinganes were incorporated into the band, bringing a funkier edge to songs like *Run* and *Hung Up On Your Love* (both written by Motown legend Lamont Dozier).

1989's *Journeyman* (**8/10**) set up Clapton for a two-year world tour, with *Pretending, Anything For Your Love, Bad Love, Running On Faith, No Alibis, Old Love* and *Before You Accuse Me* all becoming part of the live show as it progressed from arenas to stadiums.

1994's *From The Cradle* (**7/10**) probably needs *Unplugged* (which does not qualify for this set) to put it in focus – 16 blues classics recorded live and unembellished in the studio. Arguably more live than the carefully contrived *Unplugged*.

Pilgrim (**8/10**) was Clapton's first collection of new songs in a decade, and gave his live show another jolt with *My Father's Eyes, River Of Tears, Goin' Down Slow* and *She's Gone*.

What will make Clapton fans dust down their turntables for this vinyl set is the bonus *Rarities Vol 1* (**6/10**) – six B-sides and a couple of previously unreleased tracks.

Hugh Fielder

Japan

Exorcising Ghosts UMC

Upscale compilation, now half-speed mastered at Abbey Road.

Some say the trickle-down theory is a myth. But many bands who broke big in the 80s owed even more than they admit to the arty synth musings of Japan between 1979 and 1981, which prompted their mimics to subvert pop. Themselves influenced by Roxy Music and Bowie, Japan had swiftly mutated from flashy glam-rockers to introspective idealists, intent on constructing atmospheres and moods that took melancholia to the max. Their split in '82 awkwardly preceded a tour, then a live album. This double-album 'best of' served as an epilogue in late '84.

Obsessed fans at the time (I should know) deemed it somewhat superfluous, as essentially it simply cherry-picked cuts from their last three albums: *Quiet Life, Gentlemen Take Polaroids* and *Tin Drum*. Yet frontman David Sylvian's active involvement gave its selections credence, and it did its job in spreading the word to floating voters. Years on, it's acquired its own mesmerism and mystique.

It still simmers, swirls and sulks magnificently, its sequencing somehow resembling a journey from slate-grey rain clouds (*Swing, Nightporter*) to sensual sunbursts (*The Art Of Parties*). Its world building (as they say in TV and graphic novels) is flawless. The listener becomes Caspar David Friedrich's fog-facing wanderer, happily.

Chris Roberts

Leaf Hound

Growers Of Mushrooms/ Unleashed REPERTOIRE

Umpteenth reissue of Leaf Hound's debut, but a first for the follow-up.

Of all the albums that regularly sell for thousands of dollars at the preposterous end of the vinyl market, Leaf Hound's *Growers Of Mushrooms*, originally released in 1971, is one of the few that could be described as a classic rather than a curio. While the album isn't the stoner ground-zero its name and sleeve artwork suggests, it is a genuinely good collection of early-70s blues rock. The production is robust, if a little reedy, opener *Freelance Fiend* out-cowbells its peers with some ease, and *Drowned My Life In Fear* wobbles endearingly between Free and Black Sabbath. Every home should have one.

The same probably can't be said of follow-up *Unleashed*, released a mere 36 years later, with only singer Peter French present from the good old days. Perhaps surprisingly, the band didn't capitalise on their psilocybin celebrity and go full-bong, and the results are a little unimaginative. French still wails like it's 1971, successfully rhyming '*Woman don't you go*' with '*Oh no no no*' on *Nickels And Dimes*, and the riffs approximate the originals, but it's a little flaccid. Only *Deception*, a spirited second cousin of Led Zeppelin's *Over The Hills And Far Away*, suggests it was a truly worthwhile exercise.

Fraser Lewry

Tom Waits

Reissues ANTI

20th-anniversary reissues of theatrical curios.

Tom Waits offloaded two albums in 2002 with connections to the stage director Robert Wilson. This partnership had previously created excellent results on the *Dark Rider* project in 1990.

The *Alice* (**6/10**) record featured tunes from the play of the same name, based on the uncommon relationship between Lewis Carroll (aka Charles Dodgson) and the real-life Alice Liddell; Wilson's 1992 theatrical production stressed the creepy dynamic of the artist towards his child muse. Waits acceded with a sombre vision of Wonderland and the Victorian author. Musically, he used his more familiar variations on 1920s jazz and Weimar cabaret. Sundry other freaks had their cameo moments, including *Poor Edward*, a lyric about Edward Mordake, a fictional aristocrat with a second face at the back of his head. Waits kept his art on a curious arc by avoiding the expected string arrangements; his novelty of choice was a Stroh violin, plus a horn on the bridge.

The delay between the staged event and the record release had been a bonus opportunity

GETTY

for bootleggers. Their source was a batch of demo recordings, reportedly stolen from Waits's car.

Blood Money (**6/10**) was Waits's contribution to Robert Wilson's musical *Woyzeck*, a tale of jealousy, murder and weird medical experiments. There's a nod to German expressionism, but the best songs, such as *All the World Is Green*, rise above the form. Again, there's an attraction to the unloved and obsolete sounds. *Calliope* is a steam-driven tribute to the instrument of the same name, and ends with a splendid guffaw.

Both records, which Waits co-wrote with his wife Kathleen Brennan, are sometimes great, but don't have the extraordinary power of the 1983-99 era that began with *Swordfishtrombones*. The introduction of blue and red vinyl pressings may be inviting, but the purchase may disappoint slightly.

Stuart Bailie

Roger Chapman

Turn It Up Loud: The Recordings 1981-1985

ECLECTIC

Former Family vocalist's 'big in West Germany' years.

By the early 80s, it was clear that Roger Chapman's solo work would never commercially eclipse his three Top 10 albums with Family. But it was also clear he was in it for the long haul. And, aged 80, he's still at it.

This five-CD box brings together the studio albums *Hyenas Only Laugh For Fun* (credited to Roger Chapman & The Shortlist), *Mango Crazy* and *The Shadow Knows*, the live Shortlist double *He Was…She Was…You Was… We Was* and eight mostly live bonus tracks.

There was little interest in Britain, but the blistering live album recorded in West Germany made Chapman an unlikely star there, and his merging of Jimi Hendrix's *Stone Free* and Miles Davis's *Bitches Brew* was a revelation. His voice remained sandpaper, but there was polish on *Hyenas Only Laugh For Fun* (*Blood & Sand* began like a Cars track), and a belated nod to new wave on *Mango Crazy* with the call-and-response of *Toys: So You?*. A cover of Paul Brady's *Busted Loose* opened *The Shadow Knows*, which also featured the tense, piano-propelled *Leader Of Men*, perhaps the most underrated moment of an underrated career that deserves rather more than footnote status.

John Aizlewood

The Plot Vs Damage Control

2003-2009 *CHERRY RED*

Revisiting Pete's ways not taken.

Stories of Pete Way's adventures and misadventures spilled forth from many a source after the UFO bassist's passing in 2020, and he worked as hard as he played even in the later years of his career, as these three lesser-known releases from the 2000s reflect.

2003's self-titled *The Plot* (**6/10**) was a project with wantaway UFO guitarist Michael Schenker, with whom Way stayed on good terms while still keeping one foot in UFO alongside Phil Mogg and co. The album is a little too heavy on Schenker riffs to reach its potential, though, and Way's vocals sound like Bryan Adams the morning after a fearsome bender.

Better results came from Way's hook-up with another notable guitarist, Robin George. Their 2007 debut *Damage Control* (**7/10**) benefits from Way's Quireboys singer pal Spike's reliably raspy vocals, lending sleazy menace to metal-plated riff-rock like *Alice* and the angst-ridden *Dead Man Walking*.

Continuing with George on vocals after Spike's departure, 2009's *Raw* (**5/10**) was a bold move, and by his own admission he's no great shakes as a singer, giving too many of the songs a rehearsal feel. Plot duly lost.

Johnny Sharp

Alice Cooper

Live From The Astroturf

EARMUSIC

Original members reunite in a shop 2015.

In October 2015, 200 Cooper fans attending original bassist Dennis Dunaway's memoir launch at a Dallas record shop were treated to a surprise eight-song set by Alice, founding band members Dunaway, Neal Smith and Michael Bruce, plus current guitarist Ryan Roxie replacing the late Glen Buxton.

Stripped of props and costumes, *I'm Eighteen*, *Is It My Body*, *School's Out* and *No More Nice Guy* still evoke air-punching defiance and inevitable nostalgia, shot through with good humour and neat twists like *Under My Wheels*' cheeky Beatles ending. Everyone there that day was having a pinch-themselves blast, and it's contagious.

Originally released in limited multiple vinyl configurations on the shop's Good Records imprint for 2018's Record Store Day, this historic one-off (which also made a documentary) has now been made more widely available by Germany label earMUSIC.

As Alice says: "If you like raw Alice Cooper, this is it."

Kris Needs

Frank Zappa

Zappa '75: Zagreb/ Llubljanka *ZAPPA/UME*

The Yugoslavian enema bandit.

Between '72 and '75, Frank Zappa released five albums that brought in a slick, jazzy-pop elegance to replace the hippie-baiting avant-garde squiggles of the 60s, although his lyrics remained festooned with filth.

In November '75 he took a quick break from his North American tour to play a couple of shows in what was then Yugoslavia with a five-piece band that featured long-standing bassist Roy Estrada and the recently arrived Terry Bozzio, who over the next three years would go on to become one of Zappa's most iconic drummers, with a wit and repartee to match that of his boss.

The recordings have been painstakingly pieced together from obscure Eastern European technology and are not pristine, but Zappa-ophiles won't be complaining. It's been cunningly sequenced to pull the best from both shows with minimal duplication, although you do get both Bozzio drum solos.

More than half of the 26 tracks come from Zappa's then most recent four albums plus the two that would follow in the next couple of years. He also goes back to the 60s for medleys from the albums *Freak Out!* and *We're Only In It For The Money*, and there are rare outings for *Chunga's Revenge* and *The Poodle Lecture*.

Hugh Fielder

BEST OF THE REST

Other reissues out this month.

Andy Ellison

Wall To Wall Jive *EASY ACTION*

Irrepressible, indomitable, from freakbeat Silence mod to Bolan's bandmate in psychedelic nearly men John's Children, glam-era Jet-setter to punkwagon-jumping Radio Star, Andy Ellison – the Finchley Iggy – is nothing if not persistent. And here's two CDs/40 tracks of proof. **6/10**

John Coltrane

Blue Trane *BLUE NOTE*

Required listening for the pioneers of rock, Coltrane's legacy as an intuitive improvisational soloist (especially on the title track of this significantly expanded hard-bop classic of 1958) is most acutely felt in the live adventures of Hendrix, Zappa and Santana. Inspirational. **8/10**

Prolapse

Pointless Walks To Dismal Places *OPTIC NERVE*

In the 90s there was no more compelling sight than dual Prolapse vocalists Linda Steelyard and Mick Derrick ripping chunks out of each other. The jarringly confrontational Leicester kraut-punks peaked here with *Pull Thru Barker*: part clang-gaze romp, part argument, all ace. **8/10**

Steeleye Span

Live At The Rainbow Theatre 1974 *CHRYSALIS*

If you're in the market for a Steeleye Span live album, you know what you're going to get, and the diddle-di-dee count on *Live At The Rainbow Theatre 1974* is off the scale. Maddy Prior's crystal clarity peels paint, there are Irish jigs, so it's entirely fit for purpose. That said, *Gaudete* still sounds bonkers. **7/10**

Twink

Think Pink *FLOATING WORLD*

A proper off-its-tits psych hoo-hah from an enduring UK underground stalwart, 1970's *Think Pink* finds the then ex-Tomorrow/Pretty Things/future Pink Fairies drummer *Ptooff!*-ing it up with Deviant-in-chief Mick Farren, Paul Rudolph, Steve Peregrin Took et al. Far out. Still. **7/10**

The Heads

Undersided Deluxe *ROOSTER*

An English Monster Magnet with Animal from the Muppets on drums, Bristol band Heads will happily persevere with a riff until its eyes bulge. Like '71 Hawkwind on '79 Motörhead's drugs, 2002's defining (extras-doubled) third is a stoner classic with psych-punk knobs on. **8/10**

Various

Climb Aboard My Roundabout *GRAPEFRUIT*

George Martin's indulgence of The Beatles' (mostly Macca's) quasi-classical experiments with twee-leaning, nursery-rhyme psych stimulated a deluge of baroque pop mimicry, and here are three well-compiled CDs of the obvious (Keith West/Bowie) and the not so (Scrugg). **7/10**

Streetwalkin' Cheetahs

All The Covers (And More) *RUM BAR*

A two-CD set of every cover these invariably rip-snorting LA punk revivalists have recorded over the past 25 years possibly doesn't sound essential, but is. This is rock'n'roll incarnate, with guest slots from Wayne Kramer, Cherie Currie, Syl Sylvain, Jeff Dahl… An unlikely classic. **9/10**

Paul Weller

Modern Classics *UMC/ISLAND*

Weller's '98 greatest hits package, now expanded with a second platter of its constituent tracks (well, almost) recorded live at London's Victoria Park the same year, gets the gatefold vinyl treatment. You see? You can write this sort of thing without using the word 'Modfather'. Oh. **7/10**

Headswim

Flood #Redux *TRAPPED ANIMAL*

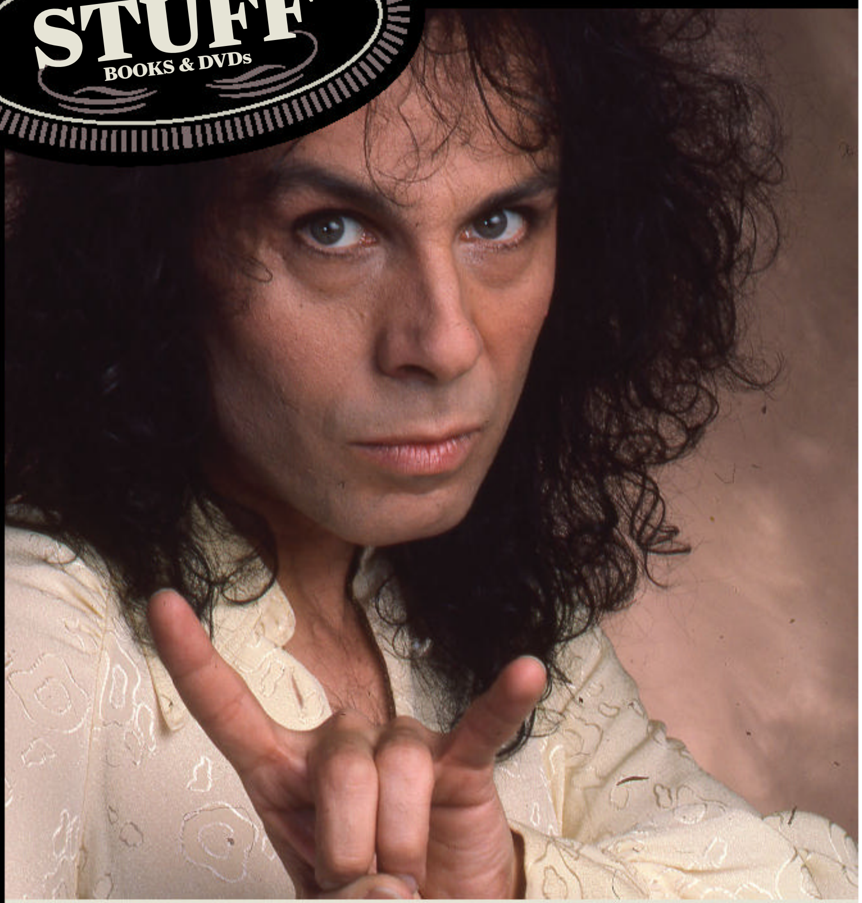
With their combination of grunge, accessible rock power and raging emotive psych (organ blarts, the mind-expandingly brilliant *Dead*) Essex's brothers-led Headswim deserved to go way further than they did, and this cannily expanded '94 debut album marks their towering zenith. **8/10**

BEST OF THE REST REVIEWS BY IAN FORTNAM

THE HARD STUFF

STUFF

BOOKS & DVDs



Dio: Dreamers Never Die

BMG

From debut to death – the all-encompassing story of Ronnie James Dio.

As with any great hero's story, there are moments in Ronnie Dio's remarkable life where you can only wonder if he can overcome yet another travail and reach the elusive prize. Although as Dio biographer and *Classic Rock* contributor Mick Wall (who does a very good job here of helping pin together Dio's disparate story) reminds us, getting three bites of the cherry in the music business never happens. Until it does.

From doo-wop crooner to certified rock star, the Ronnie Dio story is one that if you pitched it to a Hollywood studio – juvenile delinquent finds solace in music, changes the world – you'd get escorted off the lot. It's all true, though, not least his losing a best friend and contemporary in the Electric Elves when a drunk driver hit their car head-on and almost took Dio's life too. Although that was the spark that set the fire that would become the band Elf that would eventually be mostly absorbed into a band called Rainbow.

The story arc isn't perhaps the most important thing here. What is, is the way Dio touched lives. Every talking head in this film was either moved by his goodness, his generosity or his voice, and in most cases all three. Roger Glover recalls open-mouthed how Dio asked if he could play him something, and it was a finished mix of a song called *Stargazer*. Craig Goldy talks of his abusive childhood, taking refuge in his car and turning on the radio and hearing *Man On The Silver Mountain* for the first time and how brilliant it was. Which is hard to argue with. Wendy Dio, who seems to have inherited her late husband's good grace, says of their early dates, and with a smile: "He followed me around, but was too short for me". And when he was offered the Sabbath job and debated whether the band's inexorably doomy notes were the right fit: "We had eight hundred dollars to our name. I told him it was." Behind every great man…

The story doesn't shy away from the lean years, where metal was wiped off MTV and Dio's arena shows were suddenly club gigs, Ronnie's enthusiasm to sing and work still unstinting, and the brief final rebirth with Heaven And Hell, the voice still full of bloody thunder and soulful harmony. We were all lucky to have stood in his light for a moment.

Philip Wilding

The Damned

A Night Of A Thousand Vampires EARMUSIC

Video capture of Dave Vanian's illusion-packed Theatre Of Blood.

Available in a Blu-ray package that includes an accompanying two-CD audio element, this nicely presented record of the goth-punk legends' undead-themed Halloween show at London's prestigious Palladium in 2019 is significantly more than just another workaday snapshot of a band and their audience going through their customary motions.

Beginning in complementary monotone with the delivery of David Vanian's coffin to the front door of the venue in the back of a horse-drawn hearse, as an appropriately costumed audience in bared-canine-teeth mourning look on, this is clearly no ordinary performance.

And then the show itself: 90 minutes of classic vampire-friendly Damned tunes fit to wake the dead, with Dracula/Nosferatu ringmaster Vanian, in astonishingly good voice, at front and centre of a visually stunning succession of magical set-pieces. Musically, the Sensible, Gray, Monty, Pinch (in what was to be his final show with the band) Damned, appended for the night with strings and brass soloists, have never been better, but it's the 1000 Vampires show itself that truly stands repeat viewings.

Ian Fortnam

Peter Green: Founder of Fleetwood Mac

Martin Celmins OMNIBUS

Green's Manalishi revisited.

Probably Britain's finest ever blues singer-guitarist, Peter Green walked away from Fleetwood Mac and the fame and wealth his talent had earned him, ending up as a kind of lost prince.

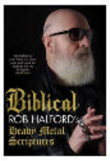
Biographer Martin Celmins has devotedly compiled this revised edition with microscopic attention to detail, seeking out acquaintances to shed light on the enduring mysteries of Green's life. As is the case with the original 1995 publication, the sheer volume of interviews and facts require marshalling into a coherent arrangement, and it falls short in that respect. One of the key points the author disputes is the oft-repeated belief that the 'Munich incident' in 1970 blew apart Green's mind and talent in one catastrophic weekend. This edition contains extra chapters from 1996 up to the London Palladium All-Star Tribute concert in February 2020 and Green's death at 73 the same year, leaving an immensely respected legacy but deep sadness too.

Claudia Elliott

Biblical: Rob Halford's Heavy Metal Scriptures

Rob Halford With Ian Gittins HACHETTE

Entertaining second book from the Judas Priest frontman.



While Rob Halford's autobiography *Confess* was a breezy, gossipy coming to terms with himself, its unlikely successor is a breezy, gossipy coming to terms with his life in Judas Priest. Part memoir, part guide to the music industry ("God knows what A&R men do nowadays. Do they still exist?") and part alternative history of Judas Priest, featuring producers, roadies, security men, the parents who asked him to sign their new-born twins ("I can't sign a baby!") and the fractious KK Downing/Glenn Tipton relationship

Halford's tone is self-deprecating ("I didn't attempt complex guitar heroics in Fight because I was too shit") and warm. While he cheerily admits "the longer you are in this metal and rock game, the more you need your slippers", he's never lost the child-like wonder of being part of a band who still play *Living After Midnight* and *Breaking The Law* because "we've never got bored of them".

John Aizlewood

Print The Myth: Joe Strummer Portraits 1981-2002

Josh Cheuse ROCKET 88

Electric-legged ex-Clash firebrand in pictures.

Say what you like about Joe Strummer, but he always gave good slouch. Photogenic to a fault, he couldn't help oozing chic. Or playing up to every camera in his orbit. Josh Cheuse caught the Clash at Bond's in the

MALOIK GENE KIRKLAND/PRESS

NYC of '81 and shot the show. This would have satisfied most 16-year-olds. Not Cheuse. Upon calling Electric Lady studios from high school he blagged his way into the band's court and, exploiting Joe's love of a lens, never completely left.

Cheuse hung with Strummer through solo/BAD/Pogues/Glasto years, fed into his creative process, shot single sleeves, habitually snapped, and here are the results. He's no Pennie Smith, but *Print The Myth* fills crucial gaps for Clash obsessives.

Ian Fortnam

Sex Pistols: I Wanna Be Me

Dave Simpson PALAZZO EDITIONS

Same story, told by yet another voice.

I, for one, thoroughly enjoyed *Pistol*, the recent Disney TV series – scurrilous, titillating and entertaining, it never once was too beholden to the truth, thus capturing the spirit of '76 London punk perfectly.

This new book from well-respected *Guardian* and ex-*Melody Maker* critic Dave Simpson is a well-placed cash-in: brash, and full of photos and a story that has been repeated a multitude of times already. But the photos are big, candid and brash, Lemmy makes an appearance, the writing is engaging and well researched, the layout is fine… and, hell, if the Sex Pistols aren't ripe for more cash-ins during a year when the focus is once more on their arch-nemesis, the royalty, then who the hell is? Of course, it comes with a cover in shocking pink and yellow.

A great stocking filler for anyone in the new generation just getting into the Sex Pistols.

Everett True

Alice Cooper Confidential

Jeffrey Morgan NEW HAVEN

Lavishly illustrated reflections on Cooper's work from long-standing journo and fan.

"Do I have to tell you how he virtually invented rock as theater, created new fashion trends, sparked a new sexual revolution, established higher standards for teenage decadence?… Say it ain't so!"

Those slightly hyperbolic words of praise give a flavour of Jeffrey Morgan's devotion to Alice Cooper, stretching back over 40 years. Morgan wrote for *Creem* magazine at a time when American rock journalism was more indulgent, and that carries through here. The photography apart, images mostly taken in recent years, Cooper feels curiously peripheral to this segmented volume, designed to be dipped into rather than read beginning to end. There's a hugely overlong section featuring fan mail, a lengthy album-by-album run-down. Only in the final section, an interview in which every "you know" from the star is faithfully transcribed, do we hear from Cooper himself, a self-effacing presence by comparison with the author.

David Stubbs

Abbey Road

David Hepworth BANTAM

From music-hall to Atmos in 22 breathless chapters.

Subtitled The Inside Story Of The Most Famous Recording Studio In The World, this ode to a terraced-house Tardis packed to its rafters with history, soundproofing and sonic tech could have been a dry old Bombay duck in the wrong narratorial hands. But Hepworth, channelling an obvious enthusiasm for his subject, has somehow managed to capture the feeling of immediacy and excitement that exemplified the storied St John's Wood studio's golden age, when countless artists (neophytes and maestros alike) would gather around a single microphone to trepidatiously capture their very essence for posterity.

At the heart of the story lies an appropriately pacy chronicle of rapid cultural/technological evolution, where a symbiotic mid-60s marriage of innovation and on-the-hoof inspiration (with no little perspiration on the part of the technicians, engineers and visionary midwife-alike producers involved, most notably George Martin) rapidly promoted the Abbey Road pop process from frill-free factory fabrication to high art. *Love Me Do* to *Strawberry Fields Forever* in four years. A quarter of the time it took My Bloody Valentine to knock up *m b v*. Imagine that… Christmas list? Definitely.

Ian Fortnam

The Hard Stuff Buyer's Guide

Porcupine Tree: any prickly times are now firmly in the past.

Porcupine Tree

A journey through the masterworks of these defiant prog pioneers – now reunited, revived and raring to go.

The news that Porcupine Tree were returning with a new album (released back in June) was greeted with a lot of hysterical shrieking from the band's huge fan base. Supposedly defunct since 2010, Steven Wilson's pioneering modern prog crew had an album on the way and live shows on the horizon, too. The sneaky devils. The new album had a lot to live up to, because Porcupine Tree have long been regarded as a benchmark for a new, highly evolved take on the progressive rock of decades past.

Conceived as a bedroom-bound studio project by a then-20-year-old Steven Wilson, Porcupine Tree outgrew its naïve origins as its creator's musicality began to blossom. Debuting with the psych-pastiche experiments of 1992's *On The Sunday Of Life…* the project gathered steam, passing through the post-techno space rock of early single *Voyage 34* and coalescing around a modernist blend of prog indulgence and Wilson's meticulous songwriting. By the mid-90s, Porcupine Tree had morphed into a real band – Wilson, keyboard/sound guru Richard Barbieri, bassist Colin Edwin and drummer Chris Maitland, later replaced by Gavin Harrison – and embarked on a series of widely praised albums and tours that took them, and the whole concept of progressive rock, toward a better future.

The band's breakthrough came with 2002's *In Absentia*, an album that beefed up the PT sound with elements of modern metal, in tandem with Wilson's burgeoning relationship with Opeth frontman Mikael Åkerfeldt. Surfing on unexpected waves of critical acclaim, Porcupine Tree marched triumphantly on. Increasingly potent on stage, thanks in part to visuals created by Lasse Hoile, they reached a peak on ninth album *Fear Of A Blank Planet*: *Classic Rock*'s Album Of The Year in 2007, no less.

Porcupine Tree's first era came to a fractious, unsatisfying end after a well-received but apparently tumultuous gig at the Royal Albert Hall in December 2010. No official split was ever announced, but few expected the band to reform, particularly in light of Wilson's successful solo career and the other members' separate endeavours. Fortunately, Wilson is a contrary sod and had been secretly working on new Tree material with Harrison and Barbieri for over a decade. The resultant *Closure/Continuation* album has been widely received as among the band's best work. As if we expected anything less.

Dom Lawson

Essential Classics

Fear Of A Blank Planet

ROADRUNNER, 2007

Porcupine Tree's catalogue is full of rounded and cohesive albums, but none hit the spot with quite the enduring impact of their ninth. *Fear Of A Blank Planet* distilled all the riff-driven intensity and post-rock audacity of earlier records down to a gleaming, diamond core of meticulously refined perfection. The title track is a skull-rattling sprint through modernity's vapid cacophony; *Anesthetize* is an astonishing, 18-minute tour-de-force; the closing *Sleep Together* is moving and menacing. Most impressively, and definitely not by design, *Fear Of A Blank Planet* made prog seem cool as fuck. Which, of course, it actually is.

Closure/ Continuation

MUSIC FOR NATIONS/SONY, 2022

Arriving a mere 13 years after the conceptual splurge of *The Incident*, Porcupine Tree's first album as a trio has been greeted with a mixture of ecstasy and, well, more ecstasy. *Closure/Continuation* bears all the hallmarks of a classic PT release – huge riffs, plaintive melodies, otherworldly ambience, Harrison's groovy drumming – but every one has been refreshed and redefined. The result is an album full of exhilarating epics like *Harridan* and monumental finale *Chimera's Wreck*, but also strange electronic detours (*Walk The Plank*) and, in *Of The New Day*, as beautiful a song as the band have ever written.

ALEX LAKE/PRESS

Superior Reputation cementing

In Absentia

LAVA, 2002

Widely revered as a 21st-century prog classic, *In Absentia* was the moment when everything came together for Porcupine Tree. Purposefully heavier than previous records, but still fuelled by Wilson's artful songwriting, it's the sound of a great band becoming even greater. *In Absentia* has hits (at least in prog terms) like *Blackest Eyes*, *Trains* and *Strip The Soul*, but it's also a quietly perverse affair, as Wilson assimilated left-field heaviness into his band's armoury, twisting his songs into unprecedented shapes. Songs like *Gravity Eyelids* and *The Creator Has A Mastertape* still sound ahead of their time today. Pure genius, basically.

Stupid Dream

KSCOPE, 1999

The album that made Mikael Åkerfeldt turn into the world's biggest Porcupine Tree fan, *Stupid Dream* was a masterclass in blending sublime melodies with deeply proggy song structures. Opener *Even Less* is simply one of the all-time great PT tunes, *Stranger By The Minute* is one of the great alt.rock hits that never was, and *Don't Hate Me* is a genuinely chilling tale of unhinged obsession. Throw in the disorientating, Talk Talk-like meanderings of closer *Stop Swimming*, the bittersweet nostalgia of *Piano Lessons* and the breezy rush of *Pure Narcotic*, and we can definitely see Åkerfeldt's point.

Deadwing

LAVA, 2005

Topping the breakthrough brilliance of *In Absentia* was never going to be an easy task, but *Deadwing* came close to at least equalling its predecessor. Some of Porcupine Tree's finest, most enduring songs are contained within: the magnificent, future-prog sprawl of *Arriving Somewhere But Not Here*, the wistful *Lazarus* and the brilliant art-metal rush of *Halo*. Meanwhile the comparatively straight-ahead hard rock groove of *Shallow* added a new, simple-but-oh-so-effective texture to their palette. More importantly, perhaps, the band were now an unstoppable live act, and that's where these songs truly soared.

The Incident

ROADRUNNER, 2009

A 55-minute conceptual feast with a bonus EP thrown in, *The Incident* is Porcupine Tree's most overtly prog-friendly record. It's also one of their best: a scintillating odyssey through every aspect of the band's sound; from the heaviest of skronk-metal freakouts (*Occam's Razor*) to the nostalgic, Floydian monolith of *Time Flies*, via the electro-metal menace of the title track. A second disc featuring five more songs was equally intriguing, with woozy prog metal sprawl *Remember Me Lover* the finest. Performed live in its entirety upon release, *The Incident* was a pretty good place to stop. Temporarily.

Good Worth exploring

Signify

DELERIUM, 1996

The moment when the Porcupine Tree sound – as malleable and unpredictable as it always was – coalesced around a bona fide ensemble, rather than Wilson plus hired hands. Eschewing the long-form experiments of *Voyage 34* and *The Sky Moves Sideways* in favour of shorter but no less adventurous songs, *Signify* was full of revelatory moments, not least the gorgeously unnerving *Every Home Is Wired* and the epic, brooding *Dark Matter*. Elsewhere, Wilson and co plunged deep into arthouse ambient territory on the blank-eyed and chilling *Idiot Prayer*. As their identity became better defined, Porcupine Tree were getting braver, too.

The Sky Moves Sideways

DELERIUM, 1995

An outright celebration of progressive rock tropes, *The Sky Moves Sideways* wore its debt to Pink Floyd with pride. What came across most strongly on Porcupine Tree album number three was that Wilson was dragging the past howling and shrieking into the future. The sprawling title track is a certified classic, but the semi-improvised splurge of *Moonloop* – restricted to the album's bonus second disc – is the wild apex of this era of the band. A languorous, starry-eyed avalanche of ambient psychedelia and Gilmour-esque soloing, it owed as much to The Orb as it did to any old-school prog band.

Lightbulb Sun

KSCOPE, 2000

Porcupine Tree were fully in their imperious stride by the time their sixth album emerged in the year 2000. The fierce chemistry between Wilson, keyboard maestro Richard Barbieri, bassist Colin Edwin and drummer Chris Maitland was on display throughout, with bleak closing epic *Russia On Ice* and the shimmering alt.rock of the title track representing two distinct sides to the band's personality. Somewhere between the two, elegantly muscular jams like *Hatesong* and *Four Chords That Made A Million* highlighted what a dynamic ensemble the quartet had become. A word to the wise, however: don't listen to *Feel So Low* if you're having a bad day.

Avoid

On The Sunday Of Life...

DELERIUM, 1992

Partly inspired by Wilson's love of XTC alter-ego the Dukes Of Stratosphear, the first Porcupine Tree album bears little resemblance to the progressive colossus that would eventually emerge. But within the quirky psychedelia of songs like *Radioactive Toy* and the title track lurks plenty of the gentle subversion and zealous curiosity that has defined everything under the PT banner. More importantly, it was the real beginning of Wilson's enduring and fruitful relationship with the studio and its potential as a tool to make his musical dreams come true. A curio, perhaps, but an important one.

Essential Playlist

The Sky Moves Sideways Phase I
The Sky Moves Sideways

Stars Die
Moonloop EP

Every Home Is Wired
Signify

Idiot Prayer
Signify

Even Less
Stupid Dream

Stranger By The Minute
Stupid Dream

Four Chords That Made A Million
Lightbulb Sun

Voyage 34 Phase I
Voyage 34: The Complete Trip

Blackest Eyes
In Absentia

Trains
In Absentia

Arriving Somewhere But Not Here
Deadwing

Fear Of A Blank Planet
Fear Of A Blank Planet

Anesthetize
Fear Of A Blank Planet

Nil Recurring
Nil Recurring EP

Time Flies
The Incident

Remember Me Lover
The Incident

Dignity
Closure/Continuation

Chimera's Wreck
Closure/Continuation

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05 HULL THE WELLY
09 EXETER PHOENIX
10 SOUTHAMPTON 1865
11 CARDIFF Y PLAS
12 BRIGHTON CONCORDE
13 BRISTOL FLEECE
16 LINCOLN PLATFORM
17 BURY ST EDMUNDS APEX
18 NEWCASTLE NORTHUMBRIA UNI SU
19 LEEDS BRUDENELL
20 CHESTER LIVE ROOMS
23 SOUTHEND CHINNERYS
24 ISLINGTON ASSEMBLY HALL
25 BILSTON THE ROBIN
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20:01 HOLMFIRTH PICTUREDROME
21:01 CHESTER LIVE ROOMS
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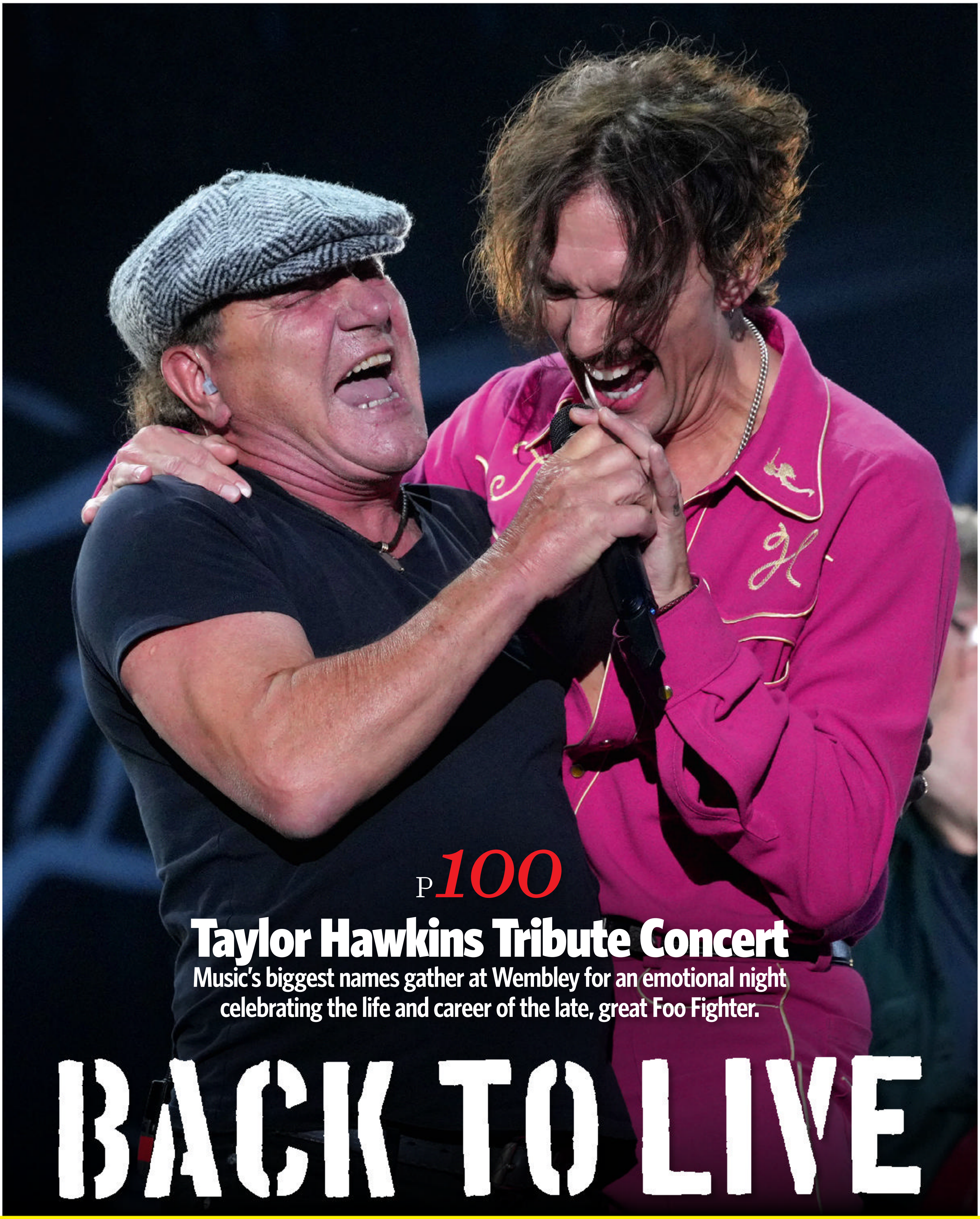


P100

Taylor Hawkins Tribute Concert

Music's biggest names gather at Wembley for an emotional night celebrating the life and career of the late, great Foo Fighter.

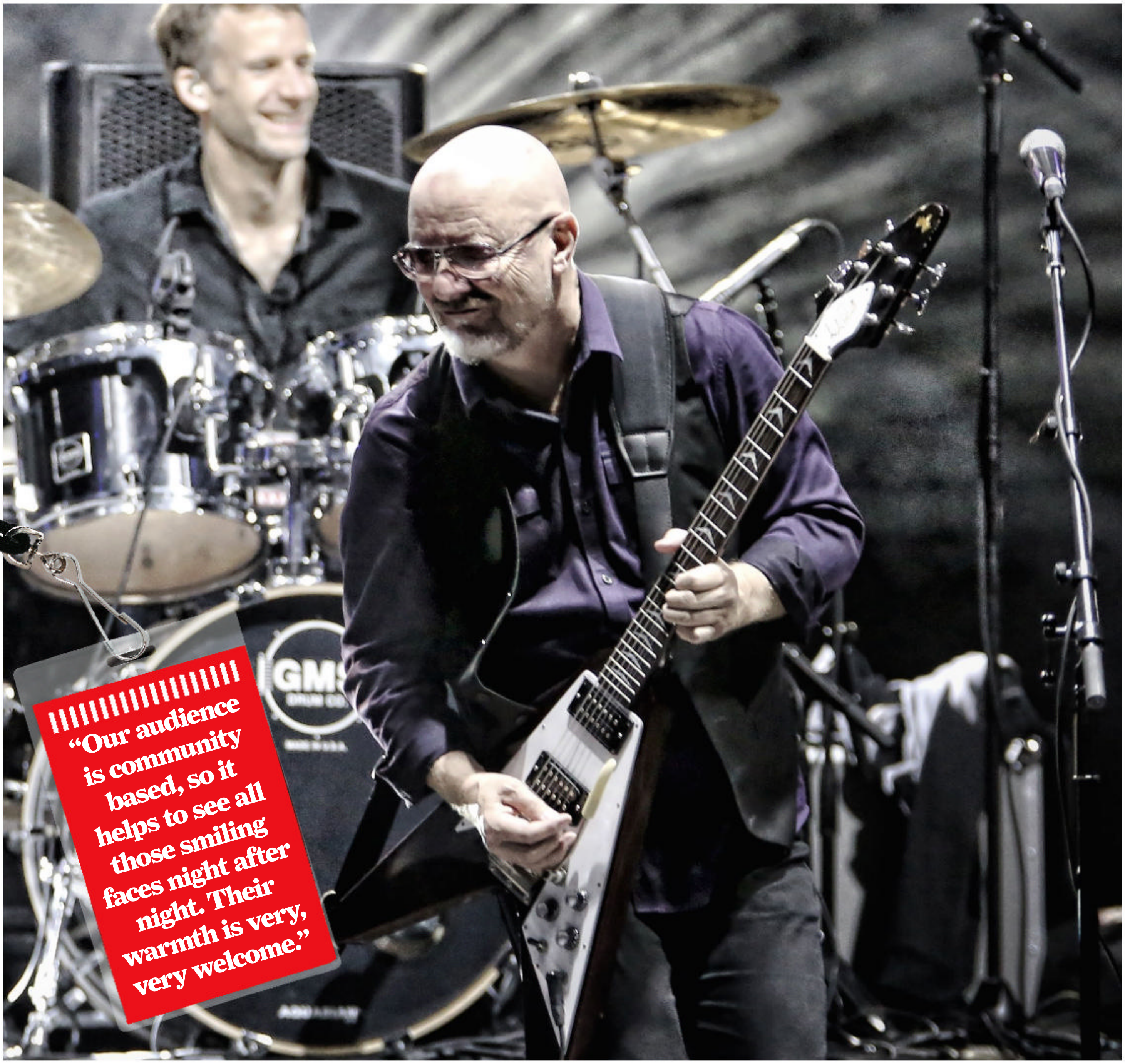
BACK TO LIVE

The High-Voltage What's On Guide

Edited By Ian Fortnam (Reviews) and Dave Ling (Tours)

P90 Interviews
P95 Tour Dates
P100 Live Reviews

KEVIN MAZUR



"Our audience is community based, so it helps to see all those smiling faces night after night. Their warmth is very, very welcome."

ROLAND KAEMPFER/PRESS

Wishbone Ash

Andy Powell launches a new tour with a rejigged line-up and a nostalgic 70s headspace.

As a fixture on the global rock scene since 1969, Wishbone Ash became pioneers of a now-ubiquitous twin-guitar sound. Guitarist/vocalist Andy Powell, their last remaining original member, previews their lengthy tour that keeps them in the UK until November 19.

Wishbone's exit path from the Covid crisis was rockier than most, with the band's return involving stand-in members and cancellations.
We flew by the seat of our pants through a British tour but our regular drummer Joe Crabtree was unavailable so we brought in Mike Truscott, a former bandmate of our guitarist Mark Abrahams, who himself couldn't make a few of the shows. So we used Michael Sturgis, who had played with us in the early 90s, and also a gentleman called Windsor McGilvray, who plays with Hugh Cornwell.

Mike Truscott is now Wishbone's full-time drummer. What happened to Joe Crabtree?
Joe got married, his wife had a baby and he decided to spend more time with his family. It's all completely amicable. Mike is a great drummer who seems to be taking us into a heavier kind of direction, which is fine by me.

As one of the hardest-working rock bands on the circuit, how did being deprived of making music and earning a living affect your mental health?
I'm quite a linear guy, and when problems come along I'm motivated to find solutions. I realised quite early that Covid would be a five-year deal, which made me quite fatalistic. I started going for very long walks in the Connecticut countryside where I live. At one point I started to feel quite paranoid about it all. I'm not a huge fan of Mister Trump, but those walks and fishing trips managed to keep my feet on the ground. They really stabilised me.

As the financial situation bit deep, Wishbone launched a Patreon site…
We did a bit of broadcasting from our homes but it wasn't easy with Mark [Abrahams] in England. I played from my kitchen, which was quite well

received. Patreon brought in a little bit of money to pay for the groceries, and it's something that I still enjoy doing.

Do you think the politicians helped – on either side of the Atlantic?
Britain did a good job with the vaccinations, and so did America, but there should have been a lot more testing than there was. Like a lot of musicians, especially ones with fifty years of experience, I used common sense to carve my own way through it all.

Are things starting to feel 'normal' again?
They're still a bit wobbly with the war in Ukraine coming on top of Covid. Rock'n'roll is caught in the middle of that. I'm hoping for much more stability over the next six months.

In your Christmas message of 2020 you predicted that, culturally speaking, we would come out the other side "with a different attitude and perspective". Has that happened?
[Laughs nervously] Maybe, but there's a lot more fear about. More paranoia. Our audience is community based, so it helps to see all those smiling faces night after night. Their warmth is very, very welcome.

Wishbone's UK autumn tour includes more than thirty dates. How different is an audience at, say, the Coliseum Theatre in Aberdare, from a counterpart in London or Manchester?
They'll be drinking more [in the smaller places], and they'll be much more vociferous. Up in Scotland they party a bit more, which is fine with us.

Are audiences in big cities more standoffish?
From the start we've been a band that goes where others fear to tread. I'm comfortable anywhere, but in some ways I prefer the smaller places because you can get in and out quicker and the hotels are cheaper. Things definitely vary from region to region, though.

You've been revisiting the band's first concert release, *Live Dates*, in its entirety. Is that what ticket-buyers will hear in October?
We've done *Live Dates* in America. In Europe we're still in the last knockings of our fiftieth anniversary, which includes the *Argus* album plus another hour.

As the group's last-remaining original, how does it feel to revisit that headspace of 1973?
We were in a good phase when we made *Live Dates*, the band was playing Hammersmith Odeon and had consolidated a provincial audience. So when we play those songs again it beings back great memories.

Were you happy with the response to the fiftieth anniversary album, *Coat Of Arms*, in 2020?
Critically it was well received, though sadly nobody sells too many physical copies anymore. We include several songs and I feel good about playing them.

How far down the line are you with a follow-up?
New music will always come out of us, but right now it's not my prime focus. Covid allowed us to become involved in some projects; we're working on a coffee table book and there will be a boxed set of unreleased live material. With the changes in the band we could be a year or two away from another album. **DL**

Wishbone Ash's UK tour begins in Leicester on October 15.

GETTY

Laurence Jones

Guitarist reaches *Destination*(s) *Unknown* with his new album.

He's shared stages with Jeff Beck, Johnny Winter and Joe Bonamassa, and has a clutch of awards to his name. Meet the British guitar hero that Buddy Guy once likened to "a young Eric Clapton".

In February you reached the big three-zero. Did this cause you to reassess your life?
It did. I'm not in the 'young' category any more, even though I still look like a baby… albeit with a beard [laughs].

You can only be the future of anything for so long.
Yeah, exactly, and with my new album I wanted to put my own stamp on what I'm doing. I'm digging into the experience of fifteen years of touring.

***Destination Unknown* is your seventh studio album. Rather than the straightforward blues-rock which some might expect, you prefer the term 'British rock crossover'.**
I just love classic music like The Who, Led Zeppelin and Queen; bands with lots of riffs and a cool British sound. The album has a bit of an eighties theme in terms of the writing.

It was created during lockdown in the garage of your band's bass player, Jack Alexander Timmis. Did their involvement go up a notch or two this time?
Lockdown definitely brought us all closer, and they believe as much in what we're doing as I do. I love British guitar rock, and the band are on the exact same page as me.

Having worked with some big names, including Mike Vernon of Bluesbreakers fame, in the past, your new label Marshall Records entrusted you with production. Did you feel any pressure with that responsibility?
Not at all. We'd rehearsed the album for two years so I was dying to get into that studio. Some of the songs were laid down in a single take, a couple of others in two. It all felt very natural.

It was recorded on a mixing desk used by the Rolling Stones on *Tattoo You*. Do you prefer to work the old analogue way?
Yeah. I hate modern technology. Computerised nonsense isn't for me. Marshall had spent millions on the studio, including the legendary desk, which had been rewired to make it brand-new again. It had a lot do with the sound of the record.

Some of its selections – for example, *Gave It All Away* and *I Won't Lie Again* – don't have much to do with blues-rock at all.
Those songs are more in tune with what I grew up listening to, artists like Bryan Adams. I love his writing. He's not British but his melodies are great.

Francis Rossi expressed approval for the album's new single, *Can't Keep From Loving You*, when you toured with Status Quo…
We'd just come off stage and Francis was waiting in the wings to tell us that he liked that one, and asked if it was one of our own. After that he stopped and chatted pretty much every night.

Quo fans are notoriously hard to please. How were you received on those dates?
We knew it would be a challenge. Hardcore Quo fans follow them everywhere, so they had no choice but to grow to like us in the end [laughs], and since then some have turned up in my own audience.

If you could play as support for any artist of your choice, who would it be and why?
I'd love to do something with John Mayer [American singer-songwriter/guitarist], but I think jamming with Carlos Santana would be a dream come true. **DL**

Jones is touring the UK until December 9.

Coheed And Cambria

The band will be co-headlining with Thrice and are looking forward to fans going "crazy".

Frontman Claudio Sanchez previews six UK dates by the genre-defying New Yorkers. After taking an unusual turn on their last album, they're ready to flaunt all they have.

Feathers were ruffled by the dance and R&B-flavoured moments such as *A Disappearing Act* on the latest album, *Vaxis II: A Window Of The Waking Mind*. Does the blinkered nature of some listeners disappoint you?
We had expected some pushback, but now that it's out the response has been unbelievably positive. Fans have really embraced that song and when we play it live they really go crazy.

***Classic Rock* described *A Disappearing Act* as "prog-emo-disco". Congratulations, you've invented a new genre.**
Well, I don't know about that…

***Vaxis II* is an offshoot of *The Amory Wars*, a tale used as the bedrock of just about all of the band's albums. Do you know how it will all pan out?**
I've an idea, of course. The frame of the story is there in my head, but hasn't been put 'pen to paper' yet. Sorry, but you'll have to wait.

***Volume I* was the band's first attempt at taking on production. How are you enjoying that?**
It's been a lot of fun. Being in lockdown at the time, we wanted to see how far we could stretch things and make it truly what Coheed should sound like twenty years after our first album. So we brought Zakk Cervini in on *Vaxis II* to co-produce and it was a really strong collaboration between us. It's comfortable and after all these years, you have to work with people who really understand the process and let you do things without getting in the way, but also raise the game a little. Zakk's involvement was as smooth as it was impactful. This is the record we set out to make.

There's been talk of Mark Wahlberg making a film of *The Amory Wars*. Presumably it would be some *Lord Of The Rings*-style project. What's the latest with that?
That's somewhat old news. We've moved on from that relationship with Mark and are in talks with other parties about bringing *The Amory Wars/Vaxis* to the silver screen. It's going well, but I can't say too much.

Opinion seems divided on whether or not these are good times for rock bands. On the one hand, in a post-Covid world audiences crave live music more than ever before. Yet it's getting increasingly tough to make a living through record sales. Where do you stand on that dichotomy?
In these times I think you have to be versatile to survive. There have always been hurdles for us and there will always be more. We just find ways around them.

Can you draw any positives from your own time in lockdown?
The making of this record. Being able to stay home and focus on the writing of the album, the book and creating the artefact without the normal distractions was a very positive thing.

This is a co-headlining trek with fellow US band Thrice, who close the show on the European leg.
We've been friends with Thrice for many years and are looking forward to it.

What about the third act, Touché Amoré?
Their last album, *Lament*, was probably my favourite of theirs. So we're very happy to have them on board.

Will *Vaxis II* be performed in its entirety?
It'll be selected songs from the album and some strong ones from the catalogue.

The band donated all proceeds from a big show in Oklahoma to the Center For Reproductive Rights. You feel that depriving women of the right to an abortion defies all common sense?
We strongly feel that women should have the say when it comes to their own bodies. These are strange times when people want to take that right away. **DL**

Coheed And Cambria's tour begins in Bristol on October 14.

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London	O2 Arena	Dec 14

THE AFGHAN WHIGS

Manchester	Cathedral	Nov 4
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Nov 5
London	Camden Koko	Nov 6

AIRBOURNE, CROBOT, BLUES BILLS

Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Dec 21
London	Brixton Academy	Dec 22

ALEXISONFIRE, BOSTON MANOR

Cardiff	Great Hall	Oct 14
Manchester	Academy	Oct 16
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 17
Leeds	Academy	Oct 19
Brighton	Dome	Oct 20
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 22

ALKATRAZZ, GIRLSCHOOL, TYTAN

Buckley	Tivoli	Feb 3
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Feb 4
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Feb 5
Bradford	Nightrain	Feb 7
Newcastle	Trillians	Feb 8
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Feb 9
Bilston	Robin 2	Feb 10
London	Camden Underworld	Feb 11

ALTER BRIDGE, HALESTORM, MAMMOTH WVH

Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 5
Glasgow	Hydro Arena	Dec 6
Dublin	3 Arena	Dec 8
Manchester	AO Arena	Dec 9
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Dec 11
London	O2 Arena	Dec 12

AMORPHIS, ELUVEITIE

Dublin	Academy	Nov 21
Glasgow	QMU	Nov 22
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 23
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 24

ANVIL

Machynlleth	Red Lion	Oct 14
Swansea	Sin City	Oct 15
Bridgewater	Cobblestones	Oct 16
Southampton	1865	Oct 18
Bournemouth	The Anvil	Oct 19
Hastings	The Crypt	Oct 24

ELLES BAILEY, CHANTEL McGREGOR

Manchester	Academy 3	Feb 4
Wavendon	The Stables	Feb 5
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Mar 17

KRIS BARRAS BAND

Tavistock	Wharf	Jan 21
Gloucester	Guildhall	Jan 25
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Jan 26
Dover	Booking Hall	Jan 27
Barnsley	Birdwell Venue	Jan 29
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Jan 30
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Feb 1
Southampton	The Brook	Feb 2
Bournemouth	Old Fire Station	Feb 3
Bristol	Thekla	Feb 4
Tunbridge Wells	Forum	Feb 7
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Feb 8
Wolverhampton	Steel Mill	Feb 9
Buckley	Tivoli	Feb 11
Manchester	Band On The Wall	Feb 12
Newcastle	Riverside	Feb 13
Edinburgh	The Caves	Feb 15
Aberdeen	The Tunnels	Feb 16
Dundee	Church	Feb 17
Glasgow	Cathouse	Feb 18
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Feb 20
Hull	The Welly	Feb 22
Norwich	Epic Studios	Feb 23
Brighton	Chalk	Feb 24
London	Highbury Garage	Feb 25

BIFFY CLYRO, ARCHITECTS

Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 5
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 6
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 8
Belfast	SSE Arena	Nov 9
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Nov 11
London	O2 Arena	Nov 12
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 14
Bournemouth	BIC	Nov 15

BLACKBERRY SMOKE, READ SOUTHALL BAND

Birmingham	Academy	Mar 26
Glasgow	Academy	Mar 27
Belfast	Telegraph Building	Mar 29
Dublin	Olympia	Mar 30
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Apr 1
Manchester	Academy	Apr 2

BLACK STAR RIDERS, MICHAEL MONROE, PHIL CAMPBELL & THE BASTARD SONS

Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 13
Norwich	UEA	Feb 15
Ipswich	Corn Exchange	Feb 16
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 17
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 18
Leeds	Academy	Feb 19
Cardiff	Tramshed	Feb 21
Bristol	Academy	Feb 22
Glasgow	SWG3	Feb 23
Newcastle	City Hall	Feb 24
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 26

BLUE ÖYSTER CULT, CATS IN SPACE

Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Oct 18
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 19

BONHAM-BULLICK

London	Holborn Pizza Express	Jan 12
Emsworth	St James' Hall	Jan 14
Sedgefield	Blues Club	Apr 14
Lowdham	Village Hall	Apr 15

BROTHER FIRETRIBE, ONE DESIRE, STRÅLE

Manchester	Academy 3	Mar 29
Birmingham	Asylum	Mar 30
London	Camden Underworld	Mar 31

BULLET FOR MY VALENTINE, JINGER, ATREYU

Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Feb 26
Bristol	Academy	Feb 28
Liverpool	Mountford Hall	Mar 1
Newcastle	City Hall	Mar 3
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 4
Leeds	Academy	Mar 6
Birmingham	Academy	Mar 7
Southampton	Guildhall	Mar 8
Swansea	Arena	Mar 10
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 11

JOHN CALE

Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Oct 23
York	Barbican Centre	Oct 24
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	Oct 31
Birmingham	Town Hall	Nov 3
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Nov 7
London	Palladium	Nov 9
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 10
Liverpool	Philharmonic	Nov 11

CAMEL

Manchester	Apollo	Jun 2
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Jun 3
Dublin	Vicar Street	Jun 4
Southampton	Guildhall	Jun 6
Aylesbury	Friars Waterside	Jun 7
Birmingham	Symphony Hall	Jun 8
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Jun 10

CARAVAN

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 14
Liverpool	Epstein Theatre	Oct 15
Buxton	Pavilion	Oct 16
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Oct 20
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 21
Glasgow	Òran Mór	Oct 22
Stamford	Corn Exchange	Oct 23
London	Highbury Union Chapel	Oct 25

CATS IN SPACE

Cambridge	Junction	Oct 14
Tavistock	The Wharf	Oct 15
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Oct 16
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 22
Reading	Sub 89	Oct 26
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Oct 27
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 29

CAVE IN, STAKE

London	Heaven	Oct 24
Bristol	The Exchange	Oct 25
Manchester	Gorilla	Oct 26
Glasgow	Room 2	Oct 28

CLUTCH

Glasgow	Academy	Nov 11
Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 12
Leeds	Academy	Nov 13
Exeter	Great Hall	Nov 15
Brighton	Dome	Nov 16
Bristol	Academy	Dec 13
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 14
Manchester	Academy	Dec 15
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 16
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 17

Classic Rock RECOMMENDS

AIRBOURNE

Expect nothing less than the usual hell-for-leather no-frills rock'n'roll from the hard-working Aussies.

See left for dates. Currently December 21 and 22.

COHEED AND CAMBRIA, THRICE, TOUCHÉ AMORÉ

Bristol	Academy	Oct 14
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 15
London	Brixton Academy	Oct 16
Manchester	Academy	Oct 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 19
Glasgow	SWG3 Galvanizers	Oct 20

HUGH CORNWELL

Wavendon	The Stables	Nov 4
Hull	Tower Ballroom	Nov 5
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Nov 9
Southampton	1865	Nov 10
Cardiff	Y Plas	Nov 11
Brighton	Concorde	Nov 12
Bristol	The Fleece	Nov 13
Lincoln	Platform	Nov 16
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Nov 17
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Nov 18
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 19
Chester	Live Rooms	Nov 20
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Nov 23
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Nov 24
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 25
Manchester	Gorilla	Nov 26
Derby	The Venue	Nov 27
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Nov 30
Edinburgh	La Belle Angele	Dec 1
Glasgow	Garage	Dec 2
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Dec 3
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 5
Norwich	Waterfront	Dec 6

CROBOT

Bristol	The Fleece	Nov 21
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Nov 22
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Nov 23
Glasgow	Cathouse	Nov 24
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 25

Crow Black Chicken

New Milton	Forest Arts Centre	Oct 20
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Oct 21
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 23
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Oct 24

ROSALIE CUNNINGHAM

Stockton	Georgian Theatre	Oct 21
Hebden Bridge	Trades Club	Oct 22
Glasgow	Nice & Sleazy	Oct 23
Edinburgh	Voodoo Rooms	Oct 24
Hull	Adelphi	Oct 25
Newcastle	Trillians	Oct 26
Preston	The Ferret	Oct 28
Birmingham	Institute 3	Oct 29
Bristol	Thekla	Oct 30
Ramsgate	Music Hall	Nov 3
Winchester	Railway Inn	Nov 4
Hastings	The Piper	Nov 5
Northampton	Black Prince	Nov 11

THE CURE

Dublin	3 Arena	Dec 1
Belfast	SSE Arena	Dec 2
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 4
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Dec 6
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Dec 7
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 8
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 11-13

THE DAMNED

London	Hammersmith Apollo	Oct 28, 29
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 3
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 4
Birmingham	Academy	Nov 5

THE DAMN TRUTH

Norwich	Waterfront	Oct 18
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 23
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 25
Glasgow	Stereo	Oct 26
York	Fulford	Oct 27
London	Camden Black Heart	Oct 28

DARE, TROY REDFERN

Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 14
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 15
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Oct 21
Southampton	1865	Oct 22
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 23
London	Islington Academy	Oct 27
Manchester	Academy	Oct 28
Newbury	Arlington Arts Centre	Oct 29

THE DARKNESS, BLACK STONE CHERRY

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Jan 28
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Jan 29
Glasgow	OVO Arena	Jan 30
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Jan 31
Manchester	AO Arena	Feb 2
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Feb 3
London	Wembley Arena	Feb 4

Recommended

THE DEAD DAISIES, FM, GRAHAM BONNET BAND

Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 3
Manchester	The Ritz	Dec 4
London	Kentish Town Forum	Dec 6
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 7
Dublin	Academy	Dec 10
Belfast	Limelight	Dec 11
Edinburgh	Academy	Dec 13
Bristol	SWX	Dec 15

DEAD KENNEDYS

Southampton	1865	May 5
Bristol	SWX	May 6
Birmingham	Academy	May 7
Norwich	Waterfront	May 9
Manchester	Academy	May 10
Newcastle	Boiler Shop	May 12
Glasgow	Garage	May 13
Edinburgh	La Belle Angele	May 14
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	May 16
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	May 17

DEEP PURPLE, BLUE ÖYSTER CULT

London	O2 Arena	Oct 20

KATIA OGRIN

Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 22
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 23
Birmingham	Arena	Oct 25
Manchester	Arena	Oct 26

DROPKICK MURPHYS, THE INTERRUPTERS

Belfast	Telegraph Building	Jan 13
Dublin	3 Arena	Jan 14
Newcastle	City Hall	Jan 16
Glasgow	The Hydro	Jan 17
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jan 18
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Jan 20
London	Wembley Arena	Jan 21
Birmingham	Academy	Jan 22

FRANCIS DUNNERY'S IT BITES

Glasgow	Saint Luke's	Jan 19
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Jan 20
Manchester	Club Academy	Jan 21
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Jan 22

THE DUST CODA, THE HOWLING TIDES

London	Camden Powerhaus	Oct 28
Norwich	Brickmakers	Oct 29
Bristol	The Fleece	Oct 30
Buckley	Tivoli	Nov 4
Derby	The Venue	Nov 5
Brighton	Hope And Ruin	Nov 6

BOB DYLAN

London	Palladium	Oct 19, 20, 23, 24
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Oct 26
Hull	Bonus Arena	Oct 27
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Oct 28
Glasgow	Armadillo	Oct 30, 31
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 2
Oxford	New Theatre	Nov 4
Bournemouth	BIC	Nov 5

ENUFF Z'NUFF

Manchester	Retro Bar	Nov 2
London	Nightclub Kolis	Nov 4
Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hell Festival	Nov 5
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Nov 6
Bradford	Nighttrain	Nov 9
Dublin	Grand Social	Nov 10
Belfast	Voodoo	Nov 11
Crumlin	The Patriot	Nov 12
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 13
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 15
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 16

EPICA, APOCALYPTICA, WHEEL

Bristol	Academy	Jan 31
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 1
Glasgow	Academy	Feb 2
Manchester	Academy	Feb 3
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Feb 4

EVANESCENCE, WITHIN TEMPTATION

London	O2 Arena	Nov 14
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Nov 15
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 17
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 19

SAMANTHA FISH, WILLE & THE BANDITS

Oxford	Academy	Oct 15
Manchester	Academy	Oct 16
Brighton	Chalk	Oct 18
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Oct 19
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 20
Glasgow	St Luke's Church	Oct 21
Southampton	The Brook	Oct 22
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 23
Cardiff	Tramshed	Oct 24
Newcastle	Wylam Brewery	Oct 25
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 26
Bath	Komedia	Oct 27

FM

Bradford	Nightrain	Oct 28
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Oct 29
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 30
Dover	Booking Hall	Nov 27

FOCUS

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 9
Glasgow	The Ferry	Nov 10
Gateshead	The Sage	Nov 11
Kinross	Green Hotel	Nov 12, 13
Ely	Maltings	Nov 21
Southampton	1865	Nov 23
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 24
Falmouth	Princess Pavilion	Nov 25
Lewes	Conservative Club	Nov 26
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Apr 20

FOZZY, ESCAPE THE FATE, SCARLET REBELS

Manchester	New Century Hall	Nov 4
Birmingham	Institute	Nov 5
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 6
Dublin	National Stadium	Nov 8
Belfast	Ulster Hall	Nov 9
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Nov 10

Bournemouth	Academy	Nov 11
Bristol	Academy	Nov 12
Glasgow	SWG3	Nov 13
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 14

PETER FRAMPTON

Hanley	Victoria Hall	Nov 5
Glasgow	Armadillo	Nov 6
London	Royal Albert Hall	Nov 8

FROST*

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 27
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Nov 28
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 29
Bath	Komedia	Nov 30
London	Islington Academy	Dec 1

GONG, OZRIC TENTACLES

Leicester	Academy 2	Nov 16
Brighton	Concorde 2	Nov 17
Sheffield	Academy 2	Nov 18
Liverpool	Academy 2	Nov 19
Bristol	Trinity	Nov 20
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 23
Oxford	Academy 2	Nov 24
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Nov 25
Manchester	Academy 2	Nov 26
Glasgow	Grange	Nov 27
Birmingham	Academy 2	Nov 29
Norwich	Epic Studios	Nov 30
Cambridge	Junction	Dec 1
Falmouth	Princess Pavilion	Dec 2
Bournemouth	Old Fire Station	Dec 3

GUN

Bradford	Nightrain	Nov 30
London	Islington Academy	Dec 1
Nuneaton	Queens Hall	Dec 2
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Dec 4
Bath	Komedia	Dec 5
Sunderland	Firestation	Dec 6
Galashiels	Mac Arts Centre	Dec 7
Glasgow	Barrowland	Dec 10
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Dec 11
Newport	Patriot	Mar 31
Narbeth	Queens Hall	Apr 1
Buckley	Tivoli	Apr 2

STEVE HARLEY & COCKNEY REBEL

Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Dec 10
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Dec 11
Bury St Edmunds	Apex	Dec 16
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Dec 19
Birmingham	Town Hall	Dec 20
Manchester	RNCM	Dec 22

H.E.A.T, MASON HILL, COLLATERAL

Leeds	Warehouse	Oct 14
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 15
Swansea	Patti Pavilion	Oct 16
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Oct 17
London	Camden Electric Brixton	Oct 18

Recommended

STEVE HILLAGE, THE UTOPIA STRONG

Cambridge	Junction	Mar 21
Norwich	Epic Studios	Mar 22
Newcastle	University	Mar 23
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 24
Manchester	The Ritz	Mar 25
Glasgow	SWG3	Mar 26
Southampton	1865	Mar 28
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Mar 29
Bristol	Academy	Mar 30
Birmingham	Institute	Mar 31
London	Kentish Town Forum	Apr 1
Brighton	Concorde 2	Apr 2

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

WARNER E HODGES BAND, RYAN HAMILTON

Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Oct 14
Newport	The Patriot	Oct 15
Bristol	Theka	Oct 16
Leicester	The Musician	Oct 18
York	The Crescent	Oct 19
Winchester	The Railway	Oct 20
Sheffield	The Greystones	Oct 21, 22
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Oct 23
Newcastle	The Cluny	Oct 26
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 27
Orkney	Stromness Town Hall	Oct 29
Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 30

THE HU

Manchester	Academy	Nov 28
Leeds	Stylus	Nov 30
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 1
Cardiff	Great Hall	Dec 2
Birmingham	Institute	Dec 3
Dublin	Olympia	Dec 5
Belfast	Ulster Hall	Dec 6

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

AYRON JONES

The inimitable Mr Jones returns to the UK, and many who caught him last time will return too. Get wise: join them.

See below for dates. Currently November 4 to November 10.

Glasgow	SWG3	Dec 7
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Dec 9

BILLY IDOL, TELEVISION, TOYAH

Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Oct 17
London	Wembley Arena	Oct 19
Glasgow	The Hydro	Oct 21
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Oct 23
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Oct 25

INME, RAGING SPEEDHORN

Newcastle	St Dominic's Catholic Club	Nov 25
Leeds	Boom	Nov 26
Glasgow	Cathouse	Nov 27
Manchester	Rebellion	Nov 28
Bristol	Thekla	Nov 30
Plymouth	Junction	Dec 1
London	Highbury Garage	Dec 2
Birmingham	Asylum	Dec 3
Nottingham	Rescue Rooms	Dec 4
Chester	Live Rooms	Dec 6
Swansea	Sin City	Dec 7
Southampton	The Loft	Dec 8
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Dec 9
Dover	Booking Hall	Dec 10
Brighton	Patterns	Dec 11

ROBERT JON & THE WRECK

Cardiff	Earl Haig Memorial Club	Feb 7
Sheffield	Corporation	Feb 8
Chester	Live Rooms	Feb 9
Leamington	The Assembly	Feb 10
London	Camden PowerHaus	Feb 11
Bury	The Met	Feb 12
Aberdeen	Tunnels	Feb 14
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 15
Hartlepool	South Durham Steel Works	Feb 16
Gloucester	Guildhall	Feb 17
Sittingbourne	Bourne Music Club	Feb 18

ARYON JONES

Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Nov 4
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 5
Glasgow	King Tut's Wah Wah Club	Nov 7
Manchester	Deaf Institute	Nov 8
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Nov 10

LAURENCE JONES

Whitby	Pavilion Theatre	Oct 14
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 20
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Oct 21
Sedgefield	Parish Hall	Oct 22
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 27
Leicester	The Musician	Oct 28

CHEZ KANE

London	Islington Academy 2	Oct 27
Buckley	Tivoli	Oct 28
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 3
Crumlin	The Patriot	Nov 4
Bradford	Nightrain	Nov 5
Newcastle	Think Tank	Nov 6
Sheffield	Corporation	Nov 18
Glasgow	Ivory Blacks	Nov 19
Cannock	The Station	Nov 22

KARNIVOOL

Bristol	Academy	Feb 3
Glasgow	Garage	Feb 5
Manchester	Academy	Feb 7

Leeds	Stylus	Feb 8
London	Kentish Town Forum	Feb 9
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 10

KATATONIA, SÓLSTAFIR

London	Kentish Town Forum	Feb 10
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 11
Bristol	SWX	Feb 12
Glasgow	Garage	Feb 13
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Feb 14

KINGDOM OF MADNESS: CLASSIC MAGNUM

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 28

KING KING

Northampton	Roadmender	Oct 16
Southampton	1865	Oct 20
Liverpool	Grand Central Hall	Oct 21
Glasgow	Barrowland	Mar 2

CORKY LAING PLAYS MOUNTAIN

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Nov 15
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Nov 16
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 17
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 18
Sedgefield	Parish Hall	Nov 19
Whitby	Blues, Rhythm & Rock Festival	Nov 20

LAMB OF GOD, KREATOR, THY ART IS MURDER, GATECREEPER

London	Brixton Academy	Dec 13
Glasgow	Academy	Dec 14
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 15
Bristol	Academy	Dec 16
Manchester	Academy	Dec 18

JOHN LEES' BARCLAY JAMES HARVEST

Leeds	City Varieties	May 23
London	Islington Assembly Hall	May 28

LEPROUS

London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Feb 7
Glasgow	Slay	Feb 8
Manchester	The Ritz	Feb 9
Bristol	SWX	Feb 10

AYNSLEY LISTER, RIK READ BAND, RAMBLIN' PREACHERS

London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Jan 31

LONELY ROBOT

London	Islington Assembly Hall	Feb 8

NICK LOWE

London	Kensington Nell's	Nov 17-19, 24-26

ERJA LYYTINEN, DOM MARTIN

Southampton	1876	Nov 7
Bilston	Robin 2	Nov 8
London	Highbury The Grace	Nov 9
Grimsby	Yardbirds	Nov 10

ERJA LYYTINEN, CHANTEL McGREGOR

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 3
Wavendon	The Stables	Feb 5
Bilston	Robin 2	Feb 6
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Feb 11

GETTY

MAGENTA, TIGER MOTH TALES
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Oct 21, 22
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 23
London	Tufnell Park Boston Music Rooms	Oct 29
Cardiff	The Globe	Oct 30
St Helens	Citadel	Nov 4
Sheffield	Local Authority	Nov 5

MAGNUM
Bristol	The Fleece	Dec 5
Southampton	Engine Rooms	Dec 6
Cardiff	Tramshed	Dec 7
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 10

MALONE SIBUN BAND, JOE MONTANA, MEL OUTSIDER REFORMATION
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Oct 25

CHANTEL McGREGOR
Halifax	Albany Arcade	Oct 15
Morecambe	The Platform	Oct 29
Hull	Adelphi	Nov 4
Glasgow	Blues, Rhythm & Rock Festival	Nov 6
Derby	Flowerpot	Nov 10
Whitby	Rocks Festival	Nov 18
St Helens	Citadel	Nov 26
Sevenoaks	Stag Theatre	Dec 9

MARCO MENDOZA
Inverness	Monsterfest	Oct 28
Chesterfield	Real Time	Nov 3
Bournemouth	Bears Cave	Nov 4
Birmingham	Asylum	Nov 5
Newcastle	Trillians	Nov 6
Hull	O'Rileys	Nov 7
Dundee	Beat Generator	Nov 10
Bathgate	Dreadnought	Nov 11
Lancaster	The Pub	Nov 12
London	Camden Underworld	Nov 13

THE MENTULLS
Kinross	Green Hotel	Oct 29
Fleet	The Harlington	Nov 6
Bury	The Met	Nov 26

MOGWAI
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Dec 20
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Dec 21
Glasgow	Barrowland Ballroom	Dec 22, 23
Manchester	Albert Hall	Feb 10
Leeds	Academy	Feb 11
Gateshead	The Sage	Feb 12
Nottingham	Rock City	Feb 14
Bath	Forum	Feb 15
Cardiff	Great Hall	Feb 16
Brighton	Dome	Feb 17
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Feb 18
Birmingham	Institute	Feb 19

MOLLY HATCHET
Buckley	The Tivoli	Nov 24
Bradford	Nightrain	Nov 25
Troon	Winterstorm Festival	Nov 26
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 11
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Nov 28
Fletching	Trading Boundaries	Nov 29

MONSTER TRUCK, THOSE DAMN CROWS
Cardiff	Great Hall	Oct 15
Sheffield	Corporation	Oct 16
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 17

MOTHER VULTURE
Winchester	Railway Inn	Oct 18
London	Old Street Old Blue Last	Oct 19
Newquay	Dead Famous	Oct 21
Bude	Carriers Inn	Oct 22

MUSE
Plymouth	Home Park	May 27
Huddersfield	John Smith's Stadium	Jun 20
Glasgow	Bellahouston Park	Jun 23
Milton Keynes	National Bowl	Jun 25

THE NEW ROSES
London	Camden Underworld	Dec 1
Cardiff	The Globe	Dec 2
Sheffield	Winter Rocks Festival	Dec 3

NIGHTWISH, BEAST IN BLACK, TURMION KÄTILÖT
London	Wembley Arena	Nov 21
Birmingham	Resorts World Arena	Nov 22
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 23

OPETH, VOIVOD
London	Hammersmith Apollo	Nov 18

ORANGE GOBLIN
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Dec 16

PAVEMENT
Leeds	Academy	Oct 17
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 18
Edinburgh	Usher Hall	Oct 19
Manchester	Apollo	Oct 20

London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Oct 22-25
Dublin	Vicar Street	Nov 10

STEPHEN DALE PETIT
London	Oxford Street 100 Club	Feb 28

Recommended

PLACEBO
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Nov 18
Brighton	Centre	Nov 19
Liverpool	Olympia	Nov 21
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Nov 22
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 24
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 26, 27
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Nov 29
Leeds	Academy	Nov 30
Newcastle	City Hall	Dec 2
Glasgow	Academy	Dec 3
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Dec 7
Birmingham	Academy	Dec 8

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

ROBERT PLANT & SAVING GRACE FEATURING SUZI DIAN
Belfast	Ulster Hall	Oct 25
Cork	Everyman Theatre	Oct 27
Galway	Town Hall	Oct 28
Sligo	Knocknarea Arena	Oct 30
Dublin	Olympia	Oct 31
Wexford	Speigletent Festival	Nov 2
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Nov 5
Glasgow	King's Theatre	Nov 6
Aberdeen	Tivoli Theatre	Nov 8
Perth	Concert Hall	Nov 9

BEN POOLE
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 18
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 19

PORCUPINE TREE
London	Wembley Arena	Nov 11

POWERWOLF, WARKINGS
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Nov 29

THE PRETTY RECKLESS
Glasgow	Barrowland	Oct 26
Manchester	Academy	Oct 27
Newcastle	City Hall	Oct 29
Birmingham	Academy	Oct 30
Bristol	Academy	Nov 1
Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 2
Norwich	UEA	Nov 3
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 5

QUIREBOYS
Coventry	Empire 2	Apr 20
Brighton	Patterns	Apr 21
Dover	Booking Hall	Apr 22
Stockton-on-Tees	Georgian Theatre	Apr 27
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Apr 28
Chesterfield	Real Time	Apr 29
Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	May 4
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	May 5
Norwich	Waterfront Studio	May 6
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	May 11
Glasgow	Oran Mor	May 12
Newcastle	The Cluny	May 13
Manchester	Night & Day Café	May 18
Birmingham	Castle & Falcon	May 19
Bristol	The Exchange	May 20
London	Kentish Town Forum	Sep 2

SPIKE'S QUIREBOYS
London	Islington Academy	Oct 15

FÉLIX RABIN
Hull	Adelphi	Nov 22
Grimsby	Yardbirds Club	Nov 23
Barnoldswick	Arts Centre	Nov 24
Keighley	Studio 5 Live	Nov 25
Doncaster	The Leopard	Nov 26
Kinross	Green Hotel	Nov 27
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 28
Leicester	The Musician	Nov 29
Leamington Spa	Temperance	Nov 30
London	Kensington Nell's	Dec 1
Chislehurst	Beaverwood Club	Dec 4

THE RASMUS
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 30
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 31
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 1
Bristol	Academy	Nov 2
London	Kentish Town Forum	Nov 3

RAVEN
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Mar 2
Newcastle	St Dom's	Mar 3
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Mar 4
Machynlleth	Red Lion	Mar 5
Birmingham	Asylum	Mar 7

TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND

Keeping it in the family: husband/wife team Susan Tedeschi and Derek Trucks lead their exceptional band.

See over the page for dates. Currently November 2 to November 10.

Great Yarmouth	Hard Rock Hell	Mar 8
Bradford	Nightrain	Mar 9
Crumlin	The Patriot	Mar 10
London	Camden Black Heart	Mar 11
Nuneaton	Queen's Hall	Mar 12

RAZOR, WHIPLASH
London	Camden Underworld	Nov 4

REEF
Tenby	De Valence Pavilion	Oct 14
Bristol	Academy	Oct 15
Portsmouth	Guildhall	Oct 20
Guildford	Casino	Oct 21
Hastings	St Mary-In-The-Castle	Oct 27
Margate	Dreamland	Oct 28
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 29
Northampton	Roadmender	Nov 10
Chester	Live Rooms	Nov 11
Minehead	Shine On Weekender	Nov 12
Bournemouth	Academy	Dec 1
Hull	The Welly	Dec 2

RHINO'S REVENGE
Carshalton	Cryer Arts	Oct 28
Chichester	Inn	Oct 29
London	Putney Half Moon	Oct 30

SAD CAFÉ
Whitby	Pavilion Theatre	Feb 3
Louth	Riverhead Centre	Feb 4
London	Chelsea Under The Bridge	Feb 10
Harpenden	Eric Morecambe Centre	Feb 11
Oswaldtwistle	Civic Arts Centre	Feb 17
Surrey	Haslemere Hall	Feb 24

SAXON, DIAMOND HEAD
Ipswich	Regent	Nov 11
Southampton	Guildhall	Nov 12
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Nov 13
Cardiff	St David's Hall	Nov 14
Bath	Forum	Nov 15
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Nov 16
Newcastle	City Hall	Nov 18
Blackburn	King's George Hall	Nov 19
Aberdeen	Music Hall	Nov 20
Glasgow	Barrowland	Nov 21
Hull	City Hall	Nov 22
York	Barbican	Nov 23
Leicester	De Montfort Hall	Nov 25
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Nov 26

SEPULTURA, SACRED REICH, CROWBAR
Glasgow	QMU	Nov 1
Manchester	The Ritz	Nov 2
Dublin	Academy	Nov 3
Wolverhampton	KK's Steelmill	Nov 4
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 5

JOANNE SHAW TAYLOR
Cardiff	Tramshed	Nov 22
Exeter	Corn Exchange	Nov 23
Reading	Hexagon	Nov 25
Hastings	White Rock Theatre	Nov 26
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Nov 28
Birmingham	Town Hall	Nov 30
Newcastle	Tyne Theatre & Opera House	Dec 1
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Dec 2
Sheffield	City Hall	Dec 4
Wavendon	The Stables	Dec 5

Portsmouth	Guildhall	Dec 7
Stroud	Subscription Rooms	Dec 9
Ipswich	Corn Exchange	Dec 10
High Wycombe	Old Town Hall	Dec 11

KENNY WAYNE SHEPHERD
Bristol	Academy	Oct 15
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Oct 16
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 18
Warrington	Parr Hall	Oct 20
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Oct 21
Sheffield	Academy	Oct 22
Gateshead	Tyne Theatre	Oct 23

SHINEDOWN, ASKING ALEXANDRIA, ZERO 9:36
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 26
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 27
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 29
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 30
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 1

SIGUR RÓS
Manchester	Apollo	Nov 7
London	Brixton Academy	Nov 10, 11
Glasgow	SECC	Nov 14
Dublin	3 Arena	Nov 17

SIKTH, PALM READER
Manchester	Academy 2	Nov 25
London	Camden Electric Ballroom	Nov 26

SKID ROW, PHIL X & THE DRILLS, COLLATERAL
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Oct 19
Brighton	Chalk	Oct 20
Cardiff	Y Plass	Oct 21
Bristol	Academy	Oct 23
London	Kentish Town Forum	Oct 24
Nottingham	Rock City	Oct 25
Manchester	The Ritz	Oct 27
Sheffield	Academy	Oct 28
Liverpool	Grand Central Hall	Oct 29
Glasgow	Academy	Oct 31
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Nov 1
Cambridge	Junction	Nov 3
Great Yarmouth	HRH Festival	Nov 4
Norwich	Epic Studios	Nov 18

SPACE ELEVATOR
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Oct 23
St Albans	The Horn	Oct 24
Oxford	The Bullingdon	Oct 26
London	Hammersmith Club	Oct 28
Marlow	Borlase Theatre	Oct 29

STATUS QUO
Aberdeen	P&J Live	Nov 25
Glasgow	SECC	Nov 26
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Nov 28
Brighton	Centre	Nov 30
Bournemouth	BIC	Dec 1
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 3

STEELEYE SPAN
Kings Lynn	St Nicholas Chapel	Oct 14
Northampton	Spinney Theatre	Oct 16
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 17
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Oct 18
High Wycombe	Old Town Hall	Oct 20

GETTY

Exeter	Corn Exchange	Oct 21
Leicester	Y Theatre	Oct 23
Wimbourne	Tivoli	Oct 24
Oxford	New Theatre	Oct 25
East Grinstead	Chequer Mead Theatre	Oct 27
Hailsham	Pavilion	Oct 29
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Oct 30
Swindon	Wyvern Theatre	Oct 31
Basingstoke	The Haymarket	Nov 1

ROD STEWART

Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Nov 16
London	O2 Arena	Nov 22, 25
Glasgow	The Hydro	Nov 29
Aberdeen	P&J Live	Dec 2
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 3
Liverpool	M&S Bank Arena	Dec 6
Birmingham	Utilita Arena	Dec 9, 10
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Dec 13
Manchester	AO Arena	Dec 14
Newcastle	Utilita Arena	Dec 17

STONE BROKEN, KIRA MAC, ASHEN REACH

Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 16

SWEET

Newcastle	Boiler Shop	Nov 24
Edinburgh	Queen's Hall	Nov 25
Lytham	Lowther Pavilion Theatre	Nov 26
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 27
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Dec 1
Trecco Bay	Planet Rockstock	Dec 2
Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Dec 3
London	Islington Assembly Hall	Dec 4
Oxford	Academy	Dec 8
Northampton	Roadmender	Dec 9
Manchester	Academy	Dec 10
Norwich	Waterfront	Dec 11
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Dec 15
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Dec 16
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Dec 17
Nottingham	Rock City	Dec 18

SWEET CRISIS

Chelmsford	Hot Box	Nov 11
Newcastle	Trillians	Nov 16
Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 17
Llandudno	Motorsport Lounge	Nov 18
Manchester	Eagle Inn	Nov 19
Sittingbourne	Bourne Music Club	Nov 25

COREY TAYLOR, CHERRY BOMBS

London	Palladium	Oct 17
Hull	Bonus Arena	Oct 19
Manchester	BEC Arena	Oct 21
Swansea	Arena	Oct 21

TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND

Dublin	Helix	Nov 2
London	Palladium	Nov 4-6
Manchester	Academy	Nov 9
Glasgow	Academy	Nov 10

THERAPY?

Plymouth	Depo	Nov 10
Falmouth	Princess Pavilion	Nov 11
Dover	Booking Hall	Nov 17
Bournemouth	Sound Circus	Nov 18
Guildford	Casino	Nov 19
Swansea	Sin City	Nov 20
Bedford	Esquires	Nov 20
Liverpool	Academy 2	Dec 1
Huddersfield	Parish	Dec 2
Swindon	Level 3	Dec 3
Colchester	Arts Center	Dec 14
Stoke-on-Trent	The Sugarmill	Dec 15
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Dec 16

DEVIN TOWNSEND

Bexhill-on-Sea	De La Warr Pavilion	Mar 28
Bristol	Academy	Mar 29
Manchester	Academy	Mar 31
Nottingham	Rock City	Apr 1
Newcastle	University	Apr 2
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Apr 4
Norwich	UEA	Apr 5

MARK TREMONTI SINGS SINATRA

London	IndigO2	Dec 15

TRIVIUM, HEAVEN SHALL BURN

Glasgow	Academy	Jan 12
Birmingham	Academy	Jan 13
Manchester	Victoria Warehouse	Jan 14
London	Brixton Academy	Jan 15

MARTIN TURNER EX-WISHBONE ASH

Knaresborough	Frazer Theatre	Oct 14
Lowdham	Village Hall	Oct 15
Hockley	The Soundry	Nov 11
Sutton	Boom Boom Club	Feb 24
Chelmsford	Social Club	Mar 3
St Helens	Citadel	Mar 5
Maidenhead	Norden Farm Centre	Mar 10

Derby	Flowerpot	Mar 16
Sheffield	The Greystones	Mar 17
Hull	Wrecking Ball Arts Centre	Mar 18
Bilston	Robin 2	Mar 19
Morecambe	The Platform	Mar 22
Glasgow	The Ferry	Mar 23
Kinross	Green Hotel	Mar 24, 25
Newcastle	The Cluny	Mar 26
Southampton	1865	Mar 30
Dartmouth	Flavel	Apr 1

UGLY KID JOE, MASSIVE WAGONS

Liverpool	Academy	Nov 3
Nottingham	Rock City	Nov 4
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Nov 6
Glasgow	Garage	Nov 8
Sheffield	Academy	Nov 10
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 11

DANNY VAUGHN (UNPLUGGED)

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Nov 24
Glasgow	The Attic	Nov 25
Ballymena	The Diamond	Nov 26
Blackpool	Waterloo Music Bar	Nov 27
Stoke-on-Trent	Eleven	Dec 1
Newport	The Patriot	Dec 2
Newcastle	The Cluny	Dec 3
London	Highbury The Grace	Dec 4
Bilston	Robin 2	Dec 6
Sheffield	Local Authority	Dec 8
Bradford	Nightrain	Dec 9

THE VINTAGE CARAVAN, EMPYRE

London	Islington Academy	Oct 25
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 26
Leeds	Warehouse	Oct 27
Glasgow	Drygate	Oct 28
Newcastle	Northumbria University	Oct 29
Manchester	Academy 3	Oct 30
Cardiff	Globe	Oct 31

VIRGINMARYS

Huddersfield	Parish	Oct 14
Manchester	Gorilla	Oct 15
Reading	Face Bar	Oct 16
Nottingham	Rough Trade	Oct 20
Hull	Tower Ballroom	Oct 21
Brecon	Northhouse	Oct 22
London	Hoxton Colours	Oct 23
Bristol	Louisiana	Oct 24
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Oct 26
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Oct 27
Newcastle	St Dom's	Oct 28
Inverness	Monsterfest	Oct 29

VOLBEAT, SKINDRED, NAPALM DEATH

Dublin	3 Arena	Dec 12
Glasgow	The Hydro	Dec 15
Leeds	First Direct Arena	Dec 16
Cardiff	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 17
Nottingham	Motorpoint Arena	Dec 19
London	Wembley Arena	Dec 20

RICK WAKEMAN, THE ENGLISH ROCK ENSEMBLE, THE ENGLISH CHAMBER CHOIR

London	Palladium	Feb 22, 23

RICK WAKEMAN'S GRUMPY CHRISTMAS STOCKING

Croydon	Ashcroft Theatre	Nov 24
Dartford	Orchard Theatre	Nov 27
Newcastle	Tyne Theatre	Nov 29
Liverpool	Philharmonic Hall	Nov 30
Poole	Lighthouse	Dec 2
Bath	Forum	Dec 3
Barnstaple	Queen's Theatre	Dec 4
Swansea	Grand Theatre	Dec 5
Cheltenham	Town Hall	Dec 6
Birmingham	Town Hall	Dec 8
Cambridge	Corn Exchange	Dec 10
Hanley	Victoria Hall	Dec 11
York	Barbican	Dec 13
Blackburn	King George's Hall	Dec 14
Buxton	Opera House	Dec 16
Ipswich	Corn Exchange	Dec 17
Worthing	Assembly Hall	Dec 21

W.A.S.P.

Manchester	Academy	Mar 17
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Mar 18
Nottingham	Rock City	Mar 19
Glasgow	Academy	Mar 21
Newcastle	City Hall	Mar 22
Bristol	Academy	Mar 23
London	Chalk Farm Roundhouse	Mar 24
Dublin	National Stadium	Mar 25
Belfast	Ulster Hall	Mar 26

WHEN RIVERS MEET

Cardiff	Clwb Ifor Bach	Oct 14
Bristol	Academy	Oct 15
Gloucester	Guildhall	Oct 16
London	Shepherd's Bush Empire	Oct 18
Huddersfield	Parish	Oct 21

CLASSIC ROCK RECOMMENDS

HARD ROCK HELL

Skid Row (pictured), The Darkness and Vandenburg head a line-up guaranteed to warm up the winter weekend

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 3-6

Sheffield	Academy	Oct 22
York	Crescent	Oct 23
Southend-on-Sea	Chinnerys	Oct 27
Liverpool	Arts Club	Oct 29
Wavendon	The Stables	Oct 30

Recommended

GINGER WILDHEART & THE SINNERS

Edinburgh	Bannerman's Bar	Oct 18
Newcastle	Riverside	Oct 19
Hudderfield	Parish	Oct 20
Cardiff	Globe	Oct 22
Plymouth	Junction	Oct 23
London	Shepherd's Bush Bush Hall	Oct 25
Norwich	Brickmakers	Oct 26
Portsmouth	Wedgewood Rooms	Oct 27
Chester	Live Rooms	Oct 29
Birmingham	Hare & Hounds	Oct 30

TO BE RETAINED ISSUED SUBJECT TO THE CONDITIONS ON BACK

THESE WICKED RIVERS

Derby	Hairy Dog	Oct 14
Stafford	Top Of The World	Dec 11

WISHBONE ASH

Leicester	Y Theatre	Oct 15
Bury St Edmunds	The Apex	Oct 17
Norwich	Epic Studios	Oct 18
Dorking	Grand Hall	Oct 19
Oxford	Academy	Oct 20
London	Islington Academy	Oct 21
Bilston	Robin 2	Oct 22
Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Oct 23
Kendal	Brewery Arts Centre	Oct 25
Carlisle	Old Fire Station	Oct 26
Glasgow	The Ferry	Oct 27
Edinburgh	Queens Hall	Oct 28
Lochgelly	Centre	Oct 29
Aberdeen	Lemon Tree	Oct 30
Whitley Bay	Playhouse	Nov 1
Stockton-on-Tees	The ARC	Nov 2
Lytham St Annes	Lowther Pavilion	Nov 3
Bury	The Met	Nov 4
Holmfirth	Picturedrome	Nov 5
Wavendon	The Stables	Nov 6
Shoreham-by-Sea	Ropetackle Arts Centre	Nov 8
Southampton	The Brook	Nov 9
Wimborne	Tivoli	Nov 10
Exeter	Phoenix Arts Centre	Nov 11
Frome	Cheese & Grain	Nov 12
Aberdare	Coliseum Theatre	Nov 13
Gloucester	Guildhall	Nov 15
Leamington Spa	Assembly	Nov 16
Liverpool	Academy	Nov 17
Buxton	Opera House	Nov 18
Derby	The Venue	Nov 19

TONY WRIGHT

Isle of Man	Colby Glen	Oct 14
Scarborough	Vibe	Oct 19
Hull	The Welly	Oct 20
Doncaster	Imperial	Oct 21
Blackpool	Compass Café	Oct 22
Hertford	Corn Exchange	Oct 26
Plymouth	Junction	Oct 27

Newport	Le Pub	Oct 28
Stafford	The Ship Aground	Oct 29
Milton Keynes	Craufurd Arms	Nov 3
Wolverhampton	Giffard Arms	Nov 4
Bradford	Nightrain	Nov 6

ZEAL & ARDOR

Colchester	Arts Centre	Nov 6
Brighton	Concorde 2	Nov 7
Bristol	Trinity Centre	Nov 8
Manchester	Academy 2	Nov 9
Glasgow	Òran Mór	Nov 11
Wolverhampton	KK's Steel Mill	Nov 13
London	Brixton Electric	Nov 13

Festivals

BLOODSTOCK FESTIVAL
MEGADETH, KILLSWITCH ENGAGE, DEVILDRIVER, MORE

Derbyshire	Catton Park	Aug 10-13

GLASGOW BLUES RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
FULL HOUSE, CHANTEL McGREGOR, STEVIE NIMMO, MORE

Glasgow	Òran Mór	Nov 6

HARD ROCK HELL
SKID ROW, THE DARKNESS, VANDENBURG, MORE

Great Yarmouth	Vauxhall Holiday Park	Nov 3-6

HARD ROCK HELL NWOCR
SCREAMING EAGLES, TRUCKER DIABLO, WHEN RIVERS MEET, MORE

Leicester	Academy	Jan 21, 22

LEEDS BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
LAURENCE JONES, XANDER & THE PEACE PIRATES, CATFISH, MORE

Leeds	Brudenell Social Club	Feb 26

LOOE BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
ELLES BAILEY, CLIMAX BLUES BAND, LAURENCE JONES, MORE

Looe	Tencreek Holiday Park	Dec 2-4

MONSTERFEST
GUN, MASON HILL, VIRGINMARYS, MORE

Inverness	One Touch Theatre	Oct 26-29

WHITBY BLUES, RHYTHM & ROCK FESTIVAL
AYNSLEY LISTER, CORKY LAING, MORE

Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 19, 20

WHITBY ROCKS
CHANTEL McGREGOR, GERRY JABLONSKI, SONS OF LIBERTY

Whitby	Pavilion	Nov 18

WINTERSTORM FESTIVAL
VANDENBERG, MOLLY HATCHET, BLAZE BAYLEY, MORE

Troon	Concert Hall	Nov 25, 26

GETTY

'For the first time in 40 years, we have the original Hanoi.'

Michael Monroe 60th Birthday Bash

Helsinki Ice Hall

Perennial teenager turns sexagenarian in style.

★ Reaching 60, legendary Finnish singer/frontman Michael Monroe decided to reward long-time local fans at Helsinki's Ice Hall with an allegedly unique reunification of Hanoi Rocks in their original line-up.

The night kicks off with a five-song set from Demolition 23. (Monroe's 90s band with fellow ex-Hanoi members Sami Yaffa and Nasty Suicide), and a career-encompassing solo band performance featuring a guitar front line of Steve Conte, Dregen and Ginger Wildheart, but the night's main attraction is the reanimated Rocks.

Even arriving on stage to their old intro music of Carl Orff's *Carmina Burana* raises pulses in the audience, and then, for the first time in 40 years, we have the original Hanoi (Monroe, McCoy, Nasty, Sami and Gyp Casino). They open with a powerful assault on *Tragedy*. Some songs are expected – *Oriental Beat, Don't You Ever Leave Me* and *Motorvatin'* (all from the Gyp era) – but there's also material from the Razzle years: *Boulevard Of Broken Dreams, Malibu Beach Nightmare* – although thankfully not the threatened calypso version. Finally, *Up Around The Bend* sees the birthday boy surrounded by the night's entire cast.

A one-off? Probably. But judging by tonight's events, offers will be rolling in.

Chris Baty

Leader of the pack: Michael Monroe fronting a Hanoi Rocks reunion.

The Cadillac Three

London The Roundhouse

Old-school country rockers take it up a notch.

★ If anything sticks a resounding two fingers up to the perceived manner in which a band makes its way to playing a venue like The Roundhouse, it's the appearance here of Nashville trio The Cadillac Three. Six years on from playing halfway down the bill on the second stage at Download (and bumped up from an even lower stage), and a mere three years after this gig was originally announced, here they are feeling right at home on stage in one of London's major venues. Think about it for a second: a proper, authentic yee-haw country rock band, the kind of which we're often told isn't hip enough for this country, kicking proverbial ass, in front of an adoringly devoted audience.

None of this is lost on frontman Jaren Johnston, who reminisces about the band's first gig in the UK in front of just 300 people down the road at Camden's Assembly, or, more notably, picking up the Best New Band gong in this very venue at the 2014 Classic Rock Awards. The band rock raw and hard on the excellent *Hard Out Here For A Country Boy* and *Cracking Cold Ones With The Boys*, get funky jamming with support act Lindsay Ell, and emotive on the wistful *Hank And Jesus*, which Johnston dedicates to his late father, then close proceedings with everyone singing along to their signature tune *The South*. A little something for everyone. Impressive.·

Jerry Ewing

Steve Hackett

Bexhill-on-Sea De La Warr Pavilion

***Foxtrot* at 50 still sounds very nifty.**

★ With Genesis having performed their last ever concert five months ago, how ironic that their former guitarist snubbed so consistently by the remaining Banks, Rutherford and Collins now inherits the Genesis mantle; although he covers a very particular era in their catalogue; only one song performed this evening, *Firth Of Fifth*, was played by Genesis on their farewell tour, and even then as part of a medley.

Tonight, honouring its fiftieth anniversary, Hackett revisits Genesis's *Foxtrot* album, along with almost an hour's worth of solo material. It's great to hear the reinstated *Spectral Mornings* among newer songs such as *The Devil's Cathedral*, although the roar that greets the staccato intro of *Watcher Of The Skies*, the first *Foxtrot* song, puts things in perspective. For those who need reminding of the album's diversity, the classical piece *Horizons* serves as a rude awakening, and *Get 'Em Out By Friday*, a quirkily expressed tale of a couple from Harlow forced out by a slum landlord, remains every bit as relevant today. But as with Hackett's previous tour, in celebration of Genesis's live album *Seconds Out*, it's the epic *Supper's Ready* that *really* resonates, despite a rather over-zealous display of fret wankery that derails its original faded-out ending.

Nevertheless, on such spellbinding form Hackett can do no wrong.

Dave Ling

Kid Kapichi

Bexhill-on-Sea De La Warr Pavilion

Hastings hooligans put the boot in.

★ Murderers Are Optimists are a hard-as-nails three-piece with a giant bassist called Jo Gonzo. He stalks the stage with homicidal intent, and takes frontman Paul Sunshine in a headlock after *Don't Know, Don't Care*. No one was going to stop him, that's for sure.

Second act Bad Nerves entertain, even though they try too hard to be cool. A pity. They deliver a pretty effective Ramones-style romp, despite lacking Da Brudders' panache to play the same song 10 times in a row.

To launch second album *Here's What You Could Have Won*, Kid Kapichi have sold out the venue to local-hero euphoria. The record sounds kinda punky, but live there's way more than three chords hammering home the truth. Their anthemic set is so pumped up and in-yer-face it begs comparison with Terrorvision, even Slade.

To the right, bassist Eddie Lewis prowls the stage like a lunatic tiger, while on the left Ben Beetham juggles guitar, industrial effects pedals and occasional keyboards. Between them, it's impossible not to be impressed by the drumming of George Macdonald and the efforts of frontman/sometime guitar player Jack Wilson, who aces a stetson, stays cool in a suit, and on the two quieter songs proves he can sing as well as incite a riot. The test for Kid Kapichi now is having this effect on audiences less familiar.

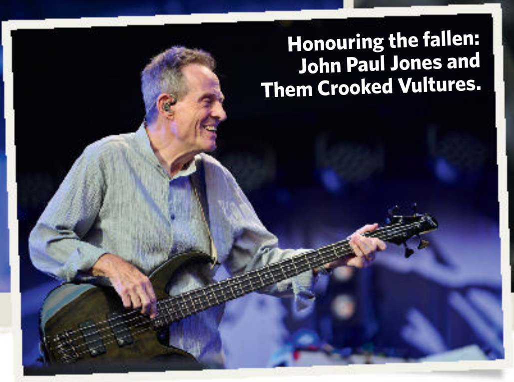
Neil Jeffries

JULIUS KONTTINEN

A fond farewell: Wembley Stadium collectively mourns the talented Mr Hawkins.

Taking a moment: Josh Homme reflects.

Brian Johnson caps off a legend's career.



Honouring the fallen: John Paul Jones and Them Crooked Vultures.

'Taylor thrummed with life; Wembley found it hard to lay him to rest.'

The Pretenders play for Taylor: "He loved me, but I loved him more," said Chrissie Hynde.

Taylor Hawkins Tribute Concert

London Wembley Stadium

A star-studded, frenetic and yet effortlessly poignant goodbye to a Foo Fighters legend.

He is, inevitably, everywhere. On T-shirts, on video screens, on pictures people are clutching, that lopsided Taylor smile into the camera. When Taylor Hawkins died suddenly, in the quiet aftermath Dave Grohl picked up the phone and asked pretty much everyone who had been touched by or known Taylor if they'd like to pay tribute to the late drummer. And to a man and woman, they all said yes.

Which leads us to today, part one of two shows to honour that impish grin, that teenage energy he exuded. Taylor thrummed with life; no wonder Wembley found it so hard to lay him to rest. The sky is a crystalline blue as the Foo Fighters take the stage to welcome the capacity crowd; the stillness and hush of 80,000 people is dizzying, a mixture of reverence and awe, made even more electric by the tumultuous applause and seemingly endless cheering that preceded it as the band appeared.

Lars Ulrich doesn't hold anything back – as per usual.

But this is a rock'n'roll show and what better way to begin than with original Manc oik Liam Gallagher with the Foos as his backing band? It's short but explosive (not unlike Liam, etc), and their take on *Live Forever* sounds like a newly replenished Led Zeppelin having a run at it. It's an incredible way to kick things off.

Just a word here on Dave Grohl, if I might. He's rarely off the stage. He seems to play drums with almost everyone – he's on bass with The Pretenders, guitar with Brian Johnson and Lars Ulrich for an utterly explosive *Back In Black* and *Let There Be Rock*… at which point the gentleman to my left practically exploded with an amped-up and emotional, "*Fuck!*" Which is how I think we all felt at that moment.

Wolfgang Van Halen wailin' with Justin Hawkins.

The loosely formed and short-lived supergroups were half the fun on the day. The Darkness's Justin Hawkins playing with Wolfgang Van Halen – who was startling, playing a guitar that looked older than anyone on the bill – for his dad's *On Fire*, which is one way of telling everyone you're in the building. I'd ruminate on their brilliant take on *Hot For Teacher* but I dropped my phone while air-drumming. That isn't a gag.

Josh Homme – each day a little closer to looking like Donald Trump thinks he does – after an earlier, rich take on Bowie's *Modern Love* with Nile Rodgers, gives a very assured and almost whimsical *Goodbye Yellow Brick Road* with Grohl and John Paul Jones backing him up, which leads, inevitably and wonderfully, to a reunion for Them Crooked Vultures. Which is a tour I'd pay cold, hard cash to see again.

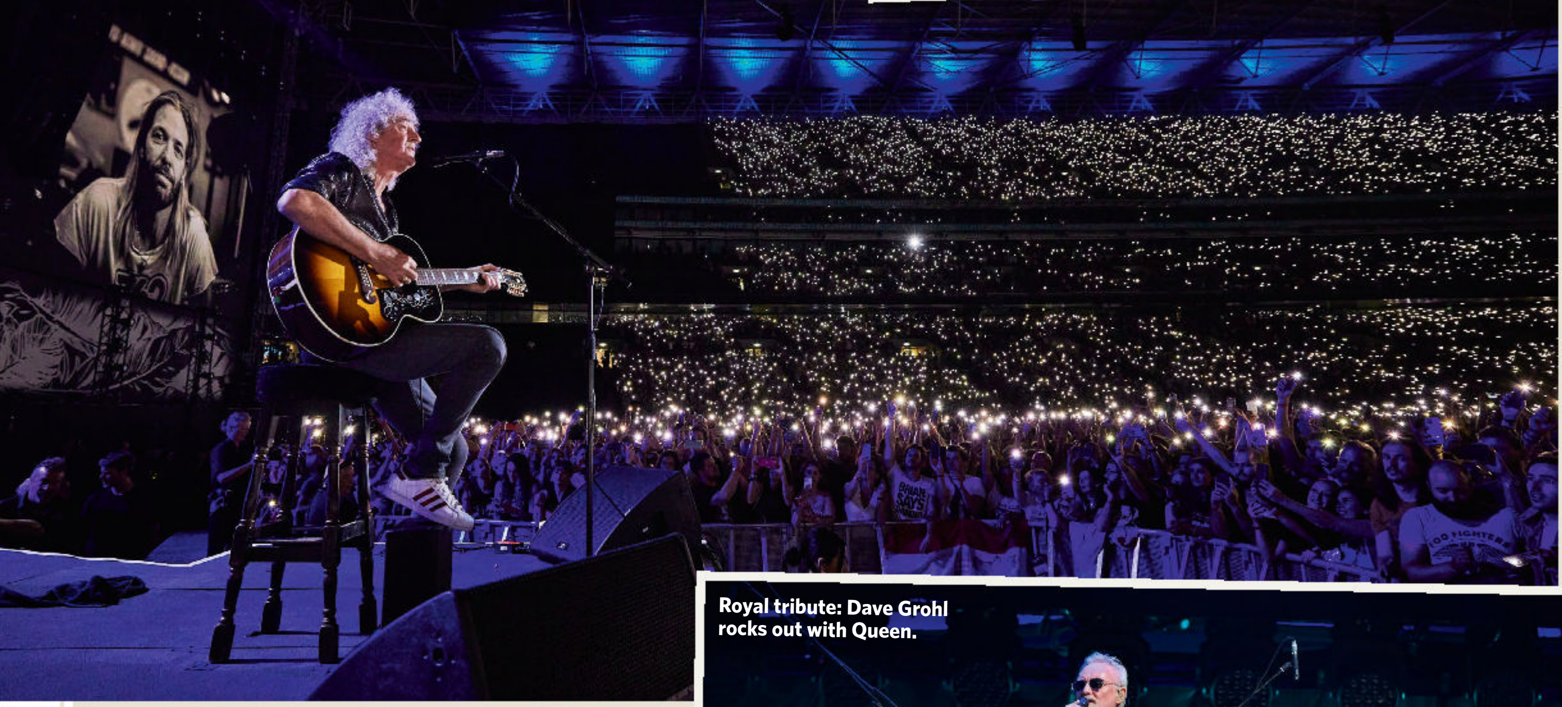
The James Gang, which must have seemed like quite the booking when anyone under 50 saw the bill, reformed just to pay tribute to Hawkins, a man who not only wrote a song about them, but mimicked their *James Gang Rides Again* artwork for his Coattails record. Their tribute to Taylor wasn't just a nod to a lifelong fan, but pure performance, Grohl dropping in – inevitably – to ride along with them.

The king of rock royalty: Sir Paul McCartney jams with Foo Fighters.

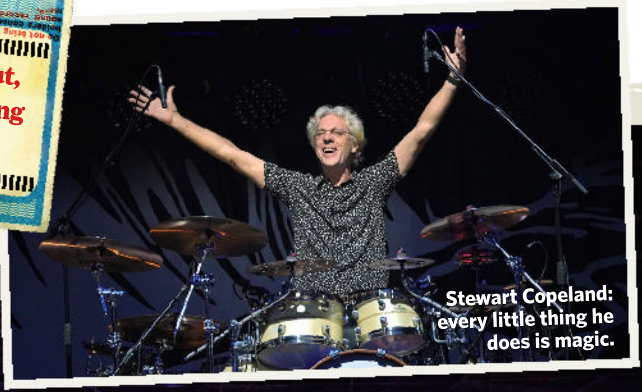
In the tradition of remarkable drummers doing impossible things, Stewart Copeland, like an antennae or superconductor with drumsticks for arms, orchestrates the Foos from what feels like a lofty perch for a thrilling run through *Next To You*. On an uproarious *Every Little Thing She Does Is Magic*, what he's doing with his hands and feet remains a mystery lost to the ages.

His old friend Neil Peart would have enjoyed tonight, a mere week or so before he would have turned 70. But he, like the man we've come to celebrate, has been taken from us now. So, for the next 18 minutes Rush in all but name go full bore. Taylor, of course, once got to play drums with Alex Lifeson and Geddy Lee in Toronto at a Foos show when they got to up to jam *YYZ*, and the last time I saw Taylor alive ▷

> **'*Everlong* sees us out, Grohl's voice cracking with emotion.'**



Phone torches held high for Brian May's poignant farewell.



Stewart Copeland: every little thing he does is magic.

was backstage at the Rogers Centre in that self-same city, as he showed off his homemade Rush T-shirt – with a starman he'd drawn on the back – to Alex and Geddy. So, tonight, with the help of Grohl and Omar Hakim (and a nod from Ged to Neil), they return the favour and rattle through *Overture*, a slightly truncated *Working Man* and a dazzling *YYZ*. Bringing life out of loss and death.

The beating heart of Queen – Roger Taylor and Brian May – and assembled Foos welcome an array of guests to cover Freddie's footsteps, the man who inspired the first of these kinds of tributes at Wembley. Eurovision's Sam Ryder, dressed in what can only be described as a jumpsuit Brian Jones might have wondered at, gives a wonderful *Somebody To Love*, much like George Michael did back in the day for Freddie. Roger and Rufus Taylor get to play *I'm In Love With My Car*, which is a nice touch, but it's Brian May's solo *Love Of My Life* which reminds us why we're all here.

There is something intangible and foreboding about grief, even shared grief. Even when Paul McCartney (the not-so surprise, surprise guest) rips through *Oh! Darling* and a blistering *Helter Skelter*, the thing is that we know, as the night draws in and mobile phones light up the stadium in glistening, white light, that we've come to say goodbye. The Foo Fighters play like their lives depend on it, and maybe tonight they do; Travis Barker pounding through *The Pretender* and *Monkey Wrench;* the prodigious Nandi Bushell laying waste to *Learn To Fly*. But even rock stars, and this sell-out crowd, need time for reflection.

Which is why we finally stop and take pause to watch Dave Grohl holding eye contact with the impossibly young and impossibly good Shane Hawkins on drums as they tear through *My Hero*… just like Dave used to do with Shane's dad, Taylor. Who knows what was passing between them then, or indeed anyone else on that stage as they played the songs that Hawkins once played? A moment trapped in time and then snatched away and gone forever. *Everlong* seeing us out, Grohl's voice cracking with emotion, 80,000 people asking one final thing: promise not to stop when I say when.

Words: **Philip Wilding**
Photos: **Danny Clinch, Sean Cox, Oliver Halfin, Kevin Mazur, Scarlet Page**

Royal tribute: Dave Grohl rocks out with Queen.

Rush remember their late friend, with Grohl helping out on drums.

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Chris Ousey: Lead vocals and Backing vocals (Heartland/Ousey-Mann/Virginia Wolf))
Jerome Mazza: vocals (Pinnacle Point/Steve Walsh)
James Christian: Lead and backing vocals (House Of Lords)
Terry Brock: Lead vocals (Strangeways/Kansas)
Lee Small: Lead and backing vocals (Phenomena/Lioneheart/Shy)
Mick Devine: Lead and Backing vocals (Devine Intervention/7/solo artist)
Ronnie Romero: Lead and backing vocals (Rainbow/Michael Schenker Group)
Tony Harnell: Lead vocals and backing vocals (TNT/Westworld/Starbreaker/Morning Wood)
Steve Overland: Lead and backing vocals (Lonerider/FM/solo artist)
Robin Beck: Backing vocals (solo artist)
Matt Sinner: Bass (Primal Fear/Sinner)
Joel Hoekstra: Guitars (Whitesnake/ Trans Siberian Orchestra/13)
Mike Slamer: Guitars (City Boy/Streets/Seventh Key/Steelhouse Lane)
Jeff Pilson: Bass (Foreigner)
Gary Pihl: Guitars (Sammy Hagar/Boston)
Steve Morris: Keyboards (Heartland/Lonerider)
Gene Black: Lead Guitars (Tina Turner/Rod Stewart/Device)
Billy Sheehan: Bass (Mr Big/The Flood/Talas)
Tracy Ferrie: Bass (Stryper/Boston)
Ricky Phillips: Bass (Baby's/Styx/Bad English)
Rocky Newton: Bass (Michael Schenker Group/Lionheart)
Josh Devine: Drums (One Direction/Levara/Devine Intervention)
Takeaki Itoh: Bass (Pinnacle Point)
Jim Kirkpatrick: Slide guitar (FM/The Flood/Bernie Marsden Band)
Chris Childs: Bass (Thunder/Lonerider)
Steve Mann: Keyboards (Michael Schenker Group/Lionheart/Ousey/Mann)
Vince DiCola: Keyboards (Rocky4/Staying Alive/Transformers/Storming Heaven)
Mark Mangold: Keyboards (Touch/American Tears/Drive She Said)
Alessandro Del Vecchio: Keyboards (Revolution Saints/Edge Of Forever/Hardline)
Stevie D: Lead guitar
Marco Mendoza: Bass (Whitesnake/Thin Lizzy/Journey)
Jimmy Nicholas: B3 (Faith Hill/Kenny Loggins/Van Zant/Jim Peterik/Juice Newton)
Tommy Denander: Guitars and keyboards (Radioactive/Steve Walsh/Robert Hart))
Brain J Anthony: Bass (Steve Walsh/Lonerider/Robert Heart/ Robbie LeBlanc)
Brian Tichy: Drums (Whitesnake/Dead Daisies/ Foreigner)
Mark Stanway: Keyboards (Magnum/Grand Slam)
Nikolo Kotzev: Lead guitars (Brazen Abbot/Robin Gibb)
Fredrik Folkare: Guitars (Unleashed/Heartwind)
Mikael Rosengren: Keyboards (Heartwind)
Steve Newman: Guitars/keys/backing vocals (Newman/Compass)
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Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds

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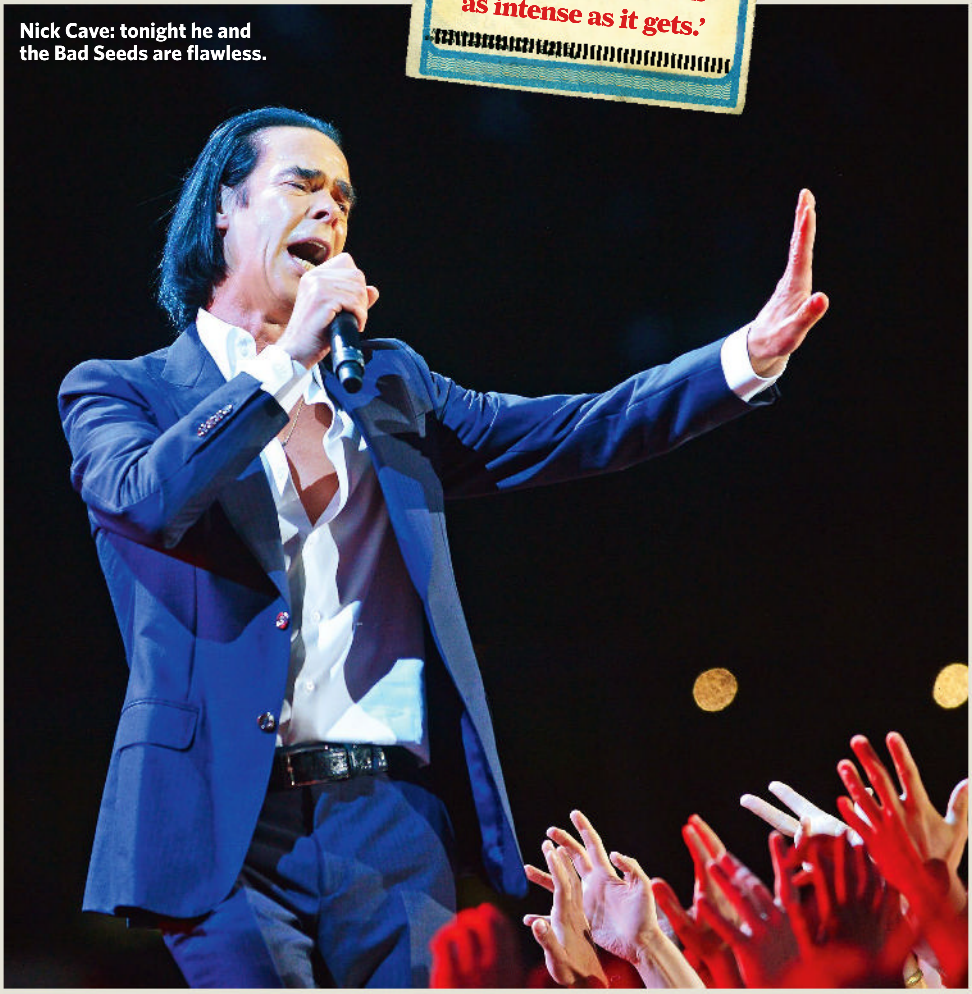
A master class in showmanship, drama, style and empathy.

★ It's no great secret that Nick Cave has mastered the art of crowd-as-congregation, and the absolute adoration emanating from the 40,000 souls that greet the Bad Seeds as they take to the stage and launch into a euphoric *Get Ready For Love* is palpable. The band last headlined this festival in 2018 at what was a much glitzier, greatest-hits affair – there's no Kylie helicoptered in to appear tonight – but in terms of heart, connection and raw emotion, this is as intense as it gets.

Cave spends most of his time down at the front, clutching hands and singing into faces (and occasionally toppling in head-first), while Warren Ellis is left to conduct things from the stage, the sturdy spine keeping it all together. Every emotion surfaces, from humour ("What are you doing, woman?" Cave bellows to a handsy fan. "That's sexual harassment in the workplace!") to deep sorrow, his eyes filling with tears during the elegant, grief-stricken *I Need You*.

There are cherished old favourites: a thunderous *Tupelo*, *The Mercy Seat* raging in fire and brimstone, a wild singalong to *Red Right Hand*, a beautiful *Into My Arms*. Somehow Nick Cave & The Bad Seeds just keep getting better and better, building a sense of love and community that is a deeply profound and moving thing to experience. Tonight they are flawless.

Emma Johnston



Nick Cave: tonight he and the Bad Seeds are flawless.

'In terms of heart and raw emotion, this is as intense as it gets.'

Big Big Train

Aylesbury Waterside Theatre

A new Train driver makes his debut at the wheel and the journey is a smooth one.

★ The British prog ensemble return to the stage less than a year after the death of vocalist David Longdon – this was always going to be an emotional night. Making his debut for over 1,000 fiercely loyal fans is new, little-known singer Alberto Bravin, who makes a forgivably nervy start with *Master James Of St George*, but finds his stride in the upbeat *Made From Sunshine* and much-loved *The First Rebreather*. Steadily, the Italian's strong voice and gentle humour win the room, while amiable fiddler Clare Lindley and guitar ace Dave Foster also have a good first show as BBT members.

This is the same crack band, but different, and they earn one ovation after another. Effusive drummer Nick D'Virgilio joins Bravin for jaunty duet *The Florentine*, then – with monster guitarist/keyboardist Rikard Sjöblom – gives a moving acoustic read of *Telling The Bees*, lovingly dedicated to its writer, Longdon. Along with fan favourites *A Mead Hall In Winter* and a throat-tightening *Hedgerow* the set offers newer, knottier material – the monolithic *Atlantic Cable*, anthemic instrumental *Apollo* – as bassist/linchpin Gregory Spawton inscrutably presides from his stage-left corner. The encore, new tune *Last Eleven*, has the fans on their feet with thunderous, bittersweet elation.

There's a spectre at this feast, but a feast is what it is. BBT's journey continues, for sure.

Grant Moon

Mudhoney

London Electric Ballroom

Grunge pioneers pick up the next generation of fans.

★ Mudhoney are a valuable lesson in how to do this rock'n'roll thing properly. After all, few would have bet on the band becoming a venerable Seattle institution that's lasted nearly 35 years, let alone half an hour. Part of their longevity lies in the fact that they all hold down day jobs and hit the studio and road when the mood and holiday allowances permit. This in turn leads to the nub of the matter – Mudhoney still fucking love doing what they do: amps are cranked, smiles and knowing looks instead of scowls are exchanged and arses are well and truly kicked.

And with that comes that glorious amalgam of 60s-inspired garage rock and punk that takes little time in detonating the venue. Placing as much emphasis on latter day material – see *Hey Neanderfuck* and *Nerve Attack* – as they do on their origins, Mudhoney avoid the curse of the heritage band. But what's also pleasing – along with their ability to laugh off the technical issues that periodically blight them tonight – is that they've managed to attract a decent-sized crowd of teenagers and 20-somethings who mosh like its 1989.

Indeed, digging the new breed losing its shit to fabulously obnoxious readings of *In And Out Of Grace* and *Touch Me I'm Sick* is to witness a baton being passed on and picked up.

Julian Marszalek

Lillian Axe/Riot Act/Kaine

London Camden Underworld

Songs from a sorely underrated melodic metal monolith, sound mix by Moulinex.

★ There's a polite tap on the shoulder as your correspondent makes notes about tonight's opening act, a young, meat-and-potatoes-style metal group from East Anglia. "Competent but generic," says a helpful voice. It's hard to disagree.

New York's Riot Act featured two ex-members of the band Riot until guitarist Lou Kouvaris died of the coronavirus after completion of an album, *Closer To The Flame*. Fellow six-stringer Rick Ventura is not the type to simply give up, and this evening's nine-song set validates such defiance. Seven of tonight's tunes are Riot originals, sung to joyous hard rockin' perfection by the leather-lunged, exuberant Don Chaffin. It's a tough act to follow, and ultimately Lillian Axe, headlining their first British tour in 29 years, fall some way short.

Truth be told, the damage is totally self-inflicted. Still led by guitarist Steve Blaze, the quintet from New Orleans have a catalogue of great songs, and their new album *From Womb To Tomb* is an absolute stunner, but playing at such volume is quite unnecessary (something reports indicate happened throughout the trek). When you must wait until the chorus to identify certain songs, then it's obvious there's a problem. All subtlety and sense of nuance is sucked out of the experience. It's like using a hand grenade to crack a nut. Complete madness.

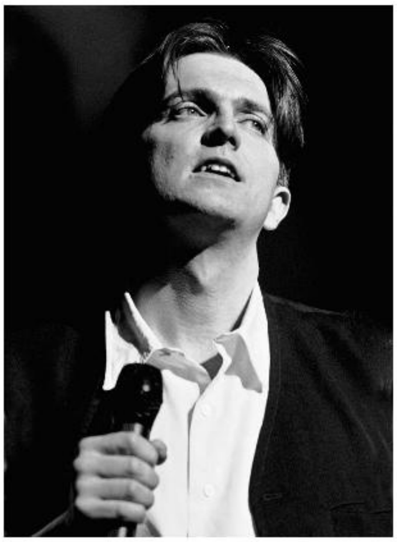
Dave Ling

GETTY

The Soundtrack Of My Life

Jellyfish founder member and keyboard player ***Roger Manning Jr*** on the records, artists and gigs that are of lasting significance to him.

Interview: **Bill DeMain**



"Music has always been my obsession," says Roger Joseph Manning Jr, who's moved through his 30-plus-year career as nimbly as fingers dancing across one of his keyboards. A founding member of Jellyfish and half of its songwriting brain trust, he went on to play in Imperial Drag, The Moog Cookbook, Malibu and his current group, The Lickerish Quartet (with ex-Jellyfish members Tim Smith and Eric Dover), all while releasing three underappreciated solo albums. A long-time member of Beck's touring band, Manning has also recorded with an incredible array of artists, including Roger Waters, Morrissey, Jay-Z, Cheap Trick, Lana Del Rey, Steve Perry, The Killers and Johnny Cash.

The soundtrack of Manning's life is heavy on the music of the 60s, 70s and 80s, and he has a special affection for Prefab Sprout.

THE FIRST MUSIC I REMEMBER HEARING

The Fifth Dimension's *Age Of Aquarius* and Blood, Sweat & Tears' *Spinning Wheel*. That tells everyone my age [laughs]. But I was so enamoured with those songs that when I was in the back seat of my parents' 1966 Ford Mustang, or in a restaurant, I would hear them and get up out of my seat and start dancing like a maniac. *Age Of Aquarius* also has those verses that are psychedelic and creepy and moody. I love it to this day.

THE FIRST SONG I PERFORMED LIVE

I took piano lessons growing up, so you had to perform at a recital once a year. None of us wanted to do that. The stage fright was just numbing. But I have a memory of performing Scott Joplin's *The Entertainer*, from *The Sting* movie. That was an entire piano-based ragtime soundtrack, and piano teachers everywhere were so grateful because their students stopped quitting lessons. Because I loved it in a way I didn't the classical music, I suddenly felt excited and confident.

THE GUITAR HERO

So many are tied for first place: Captain Sensible, Jimmy Page, Brian May. As a wild card I'll say David Rhodes. The stuff he played on the Talk Talk and Peter Gabriel albums was amazing.

THE SINGER

Paddy McAloon of Prefab Sprout. Even after all these years, I'm still in awe of his voice. It gives me chills. But of course, Freddie Mercury, Brian Wilson, Donny Hathaway, Paul McCartney, Sly Stone. So many from different genres.

THE SONGWRITER

Again, Paddy McAloon, for his imagination and harmonic sense. He's miraculous to me. But so is Burt Bacharach. When I think about songwriting, I think Wings, The Smiths, Siouxsie & The Banshees, Depeche Mode, Echo & The Bunnymen, Nirvana, Soundgarden, Supergrass, Manic Street Preachers, Blur and Damon Albarn. We haven't even gotten to disco and R&B! I don't even need to leave the sixties, seventies and the beginning of the eighties. It's all there. One could spend your whole life trying to get even remotely close to some of the brilliance and genius that happened in that twenty-year window.

THE GREATEST ALBUM OF ALL TIME

There are so many – Prefab Sprout's *From Langley Park To Memphis*, Thomas Dolby's *Golden Age Of Wireless*, Queen's *A Night At The Opera*, Cheap Trick's *Heaven Tonight*, Genesis's *The Lamb Lies Down On Broadway*, Tears For Fears' *The Hurting*… And we could spend this whole interview on 10cc – what any one of those four guys accomplished just as individuals, let alone teaming up in that brief moment in history.

THE CONTEMPORARY ARTIST

I'm also in awe of my employer Beck and how he's continued to reinvent himself. I'm so happy to have been a small part of that over the years. He's one of the few contemporary artists who I'm in awe of.

THE BEST RECORD I MADE

Spilt Milk is one of them, and then maybe my second solo record, *Catnip Dynamite*. All my solo records are things that I didn't get a chance to realise in Jellyfish.

THE WORST RECORD I MADE

It would be one that I was hired as a sideman for [laughs]. I haven't released a single thing that I do not stand by. Every record was challenging for its own reason and presented its own mess you had to dig yourself out of. I feel like me and my collaborators dug ourselves out.

THE MOST UNDERRATED BAND EVER

Prefab Sprout. So few people know about them to this day, even though they had a bit of success. I remember my college roommate and I hearing the *Steve McQueen* album for the first time. We said: "What the fuck is this? This is like easy listening." Then we both said: "Yeah, but I kind of like it!" [laughs]. Thomas Dolby's keyboards on that record are fantastic.

THE SONG THAT MAKES ME CRY

Most consistently, I'd say, *Sail On, Sailor* by the Beach Boys. The harmony and the way it's executed is just insanely beautiful. Brian was a master of allowing his heart to be unprotected and just pour out into his three-and-a-half minute pop songs. All those introspective moments that happened alongside the surf-pop-rock-dance songs. I revere that body of work.

THE SONG I WANT PLAYED AT MY FUNERAL

'Til I Die by the Beach Boys, another Brian song from *Surf's Up*.

When These Memories Fade (Jellyfish singles box set) is out now via New Land +.

"Even after all these years, I'm still in awe of Paddy McAloon's voice."

GETTY x2

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